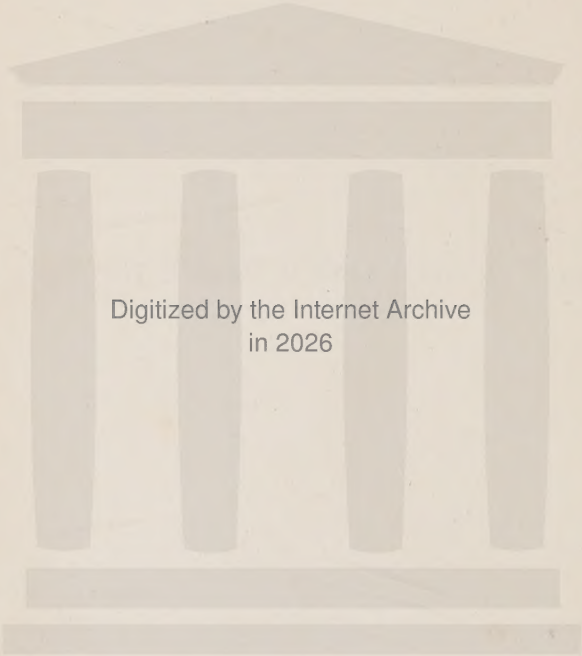
THE IRISH LABOUR MOVEMENT


Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/irishlabourmovem0000wpry_m1v4

94 5088

MODERN IRELAND IN THE MAKING

THE IRISH LABOUR MOVEMENT

FROM THE 'TWENTIES TO OUR OWN DAY

By W. P. RYAN

AUTHOR OF "THE POPE'S GREEN ISLAND," ETC.

9088
B

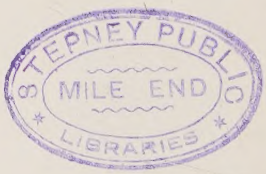
DUBLIN
THE TALBOT PRESS
(LIMITED)
89 TALBOT STREET

LONDON
T. FISHER UNWIN
(LIMITED)
1 ADELPHI TERRACE

1919

D 34321
941·59

Printed at
the talbot press
89 Talbot Street
Dublin



Réamrád.

mbaile áṫa Cliaṫ, ran mbliaṁain 1918, tar eis teaċt an air dom ó Ċoláiste Bṁuiġe i nOméiṫ, coir loċ Cáiṁlinne na háille, i n-aice le cnoc na Tána, 'reaḋ rgṁíoḃar an leaḃar ro. Ba ṁinic mé ag rmaoineaḋ, i gcaṫ an traṁnaiḋ, an laoċra na Cnaoiḃe Rua; agus naċ mór an oirṁíoċt atá idir mór-rgéal a n-imeaċta rúd agus an rgéal a bí ann do rgníoḃaḋ ra bróġmar coir Ċuain Áṫa Cliaṫ? Béaḋtaiḋe ran agus béaḋtaiḋe a ṁalairt, mar deirtear i nOméiṫ. Aċ de bṁí go bruil baint ag an rgéal ro le Fionntán ó Leaṫloḃair, le Míċeál MacDáiḃiḋ, le Séamus ó Conġaile, agus le Pádraic Macpiarais, cé déanfaḋ naċ bruil fíor-áḋḃar laoċair ann? Tá baint aige, leis, le himeaċta luċt oibre na héireann le breis agus céad bliain anuas; le n-a ndeachnadar, le n-a ndeaċadar tríd; le raoṫar, le rgrios, agus le hairgiġe na nGaeḋeal; le bród agus le bṁronglóir, le bṁreaḋ croiḋe agus le neart ár-anmann. Muna bruil a gcan ann, agus laoċar a'r uairleaċt le n-aiṁú ann, ir ann-ra atá an loċt. Ir ní-rgéal an rgéal féin.

Liam P. ó Riain.

CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	LABOUR AND THE GAEL	1
II.	LAND WORKERS' ORDEALS AND DEEDS	13
III.	WILLIAM THOMPSON, ROBERT OWEN, AND RALAHINE	32
IV.	OUR EARLY TRADE UNIONISM	46
V.	THE GUILDS AND THE UNIONS	70
VI.	ILLUSIVE EMANCIPATION	74
VII.	O'CONNELL AND TRAGI-COMEDY	89
VIII.	WEAVERS AND "LOCK-UPS"	106
IX.	LALOR AND LEAN YEARS	115
X.	IN DAVITT'S DAYS	134
XI.	CONNOLLY IN THE SCHOOLS OF LABOUR	145
XII.	CONNOLLY'S TEACHING. INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM	162
XIII.	LARKIN'S YOUTH IN THE DEPTHS	170
XIV.	THE RISE OF "LARKINISM"	180
XV.	UP FROM SLAVERY IN ULSTER	202
XVI.	THE STRUGGLE OF 1913	214
XVII.	THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE	238
XVIII.	TOWARDS THE COMMONWEALTH	253
AUTHORITIES AND SOURCES		266

34321

STEPNEY PUBLIC LIBRARIES MILE END

THE IRISH LABOUR MOVEMENT

CHAPTER I.

LABOUR AND THE GAEL.

James Connolly declared in his *Labour in Irish History* that "the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries were indeed the Via Dolorosa of the Irish race. In them the Irish Gael sank out of sight, and in his place the middle-class politicians, capitalists, and ecclesiastics laboured to produce a hybrid Irishman, assimilating a foreign social system, a foreign speech, and a foreign character." Possibly the phrase "laboured to produce" is too strong; at any rate it suggests design and deliberation; and I think that the politicians, capitalists, and ecclesiastics were often unconscious of the havoc they wrought; they erred through ignorance, want of insight, failure to grasp or sympathise with the elements and growth of nationality. Sometimes it would seem that they simply drifted, having ceased to think or live in the true sense. But whatever their actual attitude there is no question as to the dire results. Connolly's picture is unhappily true; the alien

social system and speech were assimilated to a great degree; but, as Connolly proceeded to note, it was difficult to press the character into the foreign mould—"and the recoil of that character from the deadly embrace of capitalist English conventionalism, as it has already led to a re-valuation of the speech of the Gael, will in all probability also lead to a re-study and appreciation of the social system under which the Gael reached the highest point of civilisation and culture in Europe." Connolly's instinct in apprehending and striking this Gaelic note was sound and wise. He saw the truth at almost the beginning of his active career; he was always faithful to the Gaelic vision; it furnished one of the guiding gleams of poetry in his toilsome and often harassed career; to ignore the Gael in his individuality is to miss an essential inspiration.

In sooth to ignore the Gaelic element in the survey generally is to leave the story of Irish Labour in the last hundred years less than a half-told tale. On a broad view we might well regard that story, till the later stages at all events, as a painful and often a lamentable record. Connolly has spoken of a Via Dolorosa extending through three centuries. For the Irish toilers the last of the three might seem in some respects the drabbest of all—drab in general, with, at several stages, the terrible excitement of tragedy. That view is to a large extent true, but it is not all the truth. The Gaelic workers, who were numerous in all the provinces in the first half of the nineteenth

century, had a vivid interior life of their own, and unless we realise and understand that life we have only a superficial knowledge of their real position and history. Granted that for generations, through the absence of regular education and of the merest elements of fair play in other regards, the minds of the Gaelic toilers had ceased to grow or to be really creative, the fact remains that they retained an enlivening share of the traditional lore and culture; of romance and poetry, of song and racy wisdom. The story is the same from Iveragh to Oriel, from Ring to Donegal. All these quarters just mentioned, long into the nineteenth century—and in a measure to our own time—were centres of Irish poetical and other mental cultivation; the poet and the story-teller in homely pride of place and honour. Their history, like that of many kindred quarters, has both charm and pathos; and if it were widely known, if it had seized the popular imagination, as some day it surely will, we would all have a deeper, a more human conception of hosts of Irish workers who have gone before us. There would be not a little of "glorious pride and sorrow" in our minds as we looked back to their days and destinies.

Again and again in the unfolding of the fortunes of Labour through the century we are cognisant of the vitality of the Gael; we are also sensible of a store of power in the Gaelic order which has been left undeveloped, or but slightly developed, much to the detriment both of the Gael and of Labour. There is, for example, a world of meaning in the

story of the little world in Iveragh of which the poet Tomás Rua O'Súilleabháin (1785—1848) was the head and centre. His neighbours, all Irish speakers, loved learning deeply. Students from the district were "smuggled" to colleges in France and Spain when study was illegal in Ireland. A generation or so before his time many of the "common people" spoke Latin fluently as well as Irish; a traveller found in a hut in an obscure part of the county poor lads reading Homer. When Tomás in his youth showed poetical gifts his toiling neighbours, bred in the Gaelic tradition, were delighted; he found welcome and appreciation everywhere; Daniel O'Connell, some ten years older than he, and who had spoken Irish only in his early boyhood, was a richer neighbour who shared the popular opinion and befriended the young singer of the people. Tomás expressed his faith in a Gaelic-speaking nation liberated and rejuvenated as a result of O'Connell's efforts. He hailed him in Irish lays while he was still a hope of Gaeldom: after the Clare election and otherwise. By the firesides of the people, as poet and musician, as reciter of heroic stories and legends, as a reader of the religious works of Keating, the fame of Tomás grew apace, while his songs of the anti-tithe struggle and the Repeal movement went far afield. He tried his fortune in various corners as a schoolmaster, and was for a period a postman between Cahirciveen and Derrynane, his new songs year by year a common and prized possession of the workers of the countryside. All had a hard

struggle for existence, yet often the story would suggest that their crowning interests were poetry and other joys of the mind. But interior facts such as this zestful and intellectual world of toiling Iveragh in the twenties, thirties, and early forties, are never recounted in our social or general histories. The horrors of '46, '47, and '48 brought the doom of Tomás's working audiences and finally of himself. After a dreary existence on "Committee meal," which was hateful to his manly spirit, he succumbed amidst general desolation, singing on his death-bed sacred hymns composed by himself in the gathering of the last shadows.

In another quarter of the country, while Tomás was still a happy singer, the splendid experiment of Ralahine, so indicative of the surviving co-operative spirit of the people, was the work throughout of toilers who thought and spoke in Irish. The numerical strength of the Gaelic workers far and wide, their love of culture, the utter inadequacy of their educational opportunities, the want of consideration shown them in every respect, are illustrated in older records like *The Native Irish* (1828—30) of Christopher Anderson, and in our own day incidentally in Canon O'Leary's autobiography *Mo Sgéal Féin*. The ruthless evictions and clearances, the long tide of emigration, have made a certain impression on our imaginations, but we have not clearly realised the vitality and resource of the workers who were left. Their inner lives have remained obscure to us. When

late in the nineteenth century Dr. Douglas Hyde and others turned away from the towns to the mountains, the glens, the villages, the bogs, and the seaboard, and set themselves to gather the remnant—a copious store, yet, comparatively, a remnant—of the story, song, and piety of generations it was from workers of sundry orders they obtained well-nigh everything. Here the working poor were rich, the wealthy void and vain. Indirectly, Dr. Hyde and kindred collectors are eloquent modern historians of the Irish labouring classes.

We have seen a little of Iveragh—which was typical of many other centres—in the last century. Let us consider one out of many possible illustrations of the mind and kingdom of Gaelic workers down even to the twentieth. In 1911 the Dáil Uladh issued a Donegal folk version of the *Bruidhean Chaorthainn*, the noted Fiann story of enchantment and heroism which Pádraic MacPiarais had edited from the manuscripts (giving some significant autobiography in his Irish introduction) a couple of years before. The style and colour of the folk version are indeed remarkable, "the finest and best folk-tale I have ever met with," said the editor, "Fergus MacRóigh." It was taken down by him from the recitation of Daniel Boyle of Classy on the southern bank of the Gweebarra river; the reciter was assisted by his neighbour John Ward, from whose uncle he had learned the story many years earlier. Shortly before I began the writing of

these pages I had a new opportunity of following this product of the Gaelic mind, point by point, in the Irish College of Omeath, where with an Irish version of the *Imitatio Christi* and an entertaining contemporary romance by the tireless worker, Peadar O'Dubhda, it was a text for the session. Its power and colour came home anew to me as ollamh and students followed in detail, those sunny days by the waters of Loch Cáirlinne, the fate and fortunes of Fionn and his comrades in the house of beauty that changed to a scene of enchantment and the direst peril. I could appreciate the testimony of the editor:

"The astonishing thing is that a hard-working peasant in a remote glen in Tirconaill, and with only a slender education in a foreign tongue, can tell a tale in his native language with a literary grace and finish, and a perfection of style which not one in a thousand even of educated persons could hope to equal in English. There are several passages in this tale where the language is of classic beauty. . . . if Boyle had not had literary taste and appreciation most of those literary touches would undoubtedly have been lost. This is what Irish speakers possessed, and what English speakers do not possess; the Irish speaker was so steeped in songs, and lays, and proverbs and stories—was master of a whole literature in fact, that he easily recognised beauty of expression, and ambitioned it himself. . . . I have known smoky cabins where literature was cherished and appreciated in a way that few

except great men of letters can or do appreciate it. And I have seen wearied haymakers, after the prolonged toil of a midsummer day, sit round in a circle while one of their number recited in Irish a Fenian lay—the 'Chase of Slieve Gullion' perhaps, or 'The Lay of the Great Woman.' Breathless they listened, till at some turn in the narrative they broke out into a chorus of applause, or sorrow, or indignation. What impressed me then, and impresses me even more now, was the intensity of interest which they showed in these poems or stories, showing as it did a literary taste which has disappeared with the language."

Points like the foregoing bring us naturally to the consideration of the Gaelic League (preceded by the useful but far less popular S.P.I.L. and Gaelic Union). When it came into the light with the new century it affected, and was affected by, the workers. The story, however, is complicated. The League on the whole did not attempt nearly as much for the social and intellectual fortunes of the Labour world as it might and ought to have done, but its influence on elements thereof was considerable. Apart from the young workers to whom it gave, or whom it helped to find, careers in Ireland, it prepared the way in no slight degree for a democracy of intellect, a socialism of spirit. The best from the worker was welcomed and applauded: as singer, reciter, story-teller, musician, dancer, or where he would, as original writer. It were long to tell, and not easy to estimate, the effect of the programme and spirit of its classes,

its social gatherings, its general festivals. It is easy to see where it unwisely stopped short, for lack of courage or vision; one may not so readily realise and do justice to the positive and sometimes subtle achievements. And in most places, in the country districts especially, how spirited and significant was the response of the workers!—sometimes the fathers or grandfathers of the rising generation. We have seen them come forth at Feis and Oireachtas, homely in style and bearing as if they had just walked in from the plough or the harvest field, and charm judges and audience with folk-tale or heroic narrative, or Ossianic lay: suggesting a whole order of olden life on the morning (as we hoped and hope) of the new. And many of the experiences of the League organisers and travelling teachers would be illuminating in regard to the fortunes and inlook of the hard-pressed workers of the Gaeltacht. The organisers' reports and counsels, however, were not always, or nearly always, as definite in their effect on Gaelic Leaguers in general as they ought to have been. I remember that again and again Tomás O'Concheannain, for many years the chief organiser in Leath-Chuinn, or the northern half of Ireland, stressed the perennial plight of Irish-speaking fishermen, weavers, and other workers: showed what might be done by more favoured leaguers to widen their market and enliven their lives, and so link them advantageously with the rest of the country, to which they had much that was of mental moment to give. The response was not

great. In social and economic matters the general Gaels could not plan boldly nor act resolutely and consistently. They failed to see that to save and strengthen Irish in the Gaeltacht a thoroughgoing economic and social scheme was essential. The nation, Eoin MacNeill once said, should be a great human household. The part of the labouring Gael (and non-Gael) in the "household" remains to this day very far from human.

While the Gaelic League grew apace in some directions the latterday Irish Labour movement reached its first decisive manifestations with Larkin, Connolly, and their comrades. Larkin was quick to see the importance of the Gaelic idea, and supported it strongly, taking the practical course of having his boys educated in the most distinctive Irish school of our time, Sgoil Eanna. Connolly, as we have seen, set the fact of the Gaelic basis and inspiration in the very heart of his programme. He was as sensible of it as of the other most vital fact on which the whole cause of Labour depended and turned: the securing by the workers—in the broad sense—of the land and the instruments of production, distribution, and exchange, and their co-operative use and control by the workers, whose delegates would form the nation's government: in other words by a creative community in its own social and mental interests. In short he stood for Gaelicism (in a sense more extensive and revolutionary than most Gaelic Leaguers) and for industrial unionism. In these

he believed lay the natural genius and progressive lines of the race.

Partly through him and Larkin and the things they made real and challenging, partly through their own vision and evolution, other distinctive minds that at first had little apparent relation to harassed and militant Labour, were brought into direct association with it, and gave it ideas that must always be living parts of its gospel. Outstanding instances are "Æ" and Pádraic Mac-Piarais—still earlier Standish O'Grady addressed communal ideas to under-men and world-wasted clerks with something of the glow he had expended a generation before on the coming of Cuchulainn and the fortunes of the Fianna. One does not habitually think of Pearse and "Æ" as Irish Labour leaders. But the interpreter of the souls of remote Connacht workers, the author of *The Sovereign People* on the eve of the Rising, has thoughts of intimate and burning interest for those who must humanise industry and prepare the way of the fraternal Commonwealth. The author of the Letter to the Masters of Dublin and the Albert Hall Address of November Day, 1913, would have place, had he written or uttered no more, in the later history of Irish Labour. But in *The National Being* he has set forth in full detail a great deal of what ought to be its own essential creed; even as he has done in other studies whose essence is the declaration of the divine in man—the saving truth that must be grasped through good and ill by Labour. The Gaelicism of Pearse

was explicit, that of "Æ" is implicit; his resetting of the old Gaelic ideas of economic democracy and mental individualism is much more than an intellectual achievement, it is an outcome of intuition and vision.

When we look back the long course of a hundred years and more both Labour and Gaelicism in Ireland show three extensive and kindred stages. In the first forty or even fifty years of the nineteenth century Labour was mostly Gaelic in thought and speech, and though crushed and tortured it preserved some gleams of interior enchantment. In the next thirty or forty years when Gaelicism ebbed or died in most of the country, Labour was often stagnant or ineffective; its soul had gone. It bestirred itself anew with the Gaelic revival, and its forward spirits in a couple of decades reached a stage of organization and evangel that half a generation before would have seemed a dream. It all means that the mental, economic, and other elements of a nation are parts of a subtle and sensitive unity. Their phases and fortunes, soon or late, are discovered to be kindred. And the Nation means immeasurably more than we consciously and habitually realise. Below and beyond the nation we know is the deeper and divine Nation, the subliminal Humanity seeking ever and always to come into manifestation and fulfilment. In that august Nation Labour like the rest has its roots and the inspiration of its spirit.

Chapter II.

LAND WORKERS' ORDEALS AND DEEDS.

The term "Labour movement" has a singular grimness and irony in connection with the earlier decades of the nineteenth century. There was movement in several senses: literal and figurative, social and industrial, despairing and impassioned. Actual organization often took violent and tragic forms.

Part of the general history of the period is an oft-told tale. Without control of the land and the means of life generally, with a vicious system of landlordism, without native government, without rational education—industrial or literary—with the sweeping effects of English competition in most Irish spheres and markets (and a certain lack of enterprise on the part of home manufacturers) once "free trade" between the two countries came, the Irish nation steadily deteriorated, and for the workers especially life spelt burden and penury. The main fruits of the land, which might have been far greater, did not go to the people, and manufacture, for the most part, came surely to grief. The early blows to the woollen and silk industries, the gradual extinction of others less important but considerable, the

heavy duty on coal, which at a critical stage so seriously handicapped Irish manufacture; ruthless evictions and "consolidation" of farms, periodic visitations of widespread Hunger in a productive land; unceasing emigration; the development of the railways with, in due course, their "through rates" so decisively in favour of the foreigner: these are some of the broader items of the tale in town and country. Yet much of the social and most of the intellectual history of the period remain to be written. That of Labour, apart from the sections in Connolly's survey, has been largely left to the imagination.

From all but forgotten documents relating to the time: evidence taken by parliamentary committees and commissions; reports of the committees and commissioners themselves, impressions of travellers, pamphlets and volumes by social propagandists and critics, accounts of mendicity institutions, and more, we obtain an extraordinary sense of burden and misery, apart from the actual conclusions or theories propounded. It is literally true to say that hosts of the people: men, women, and children, were in almost constant movement in search of the barest necessaries of existence. The Irish humanity that wandered in all directions was as marked a feature of the nation as the Ireland that slaved to make ends meet. Very often indeed the wanderers and the workers were parts of the same household: tilling and begging were just different ways of trying to solve the one almost insoluble problem. Thus Connacht

peasants would rent pieces of the worst land from the farmers and plant potatoes in the spring. Then all would leave home until the potatoes were fit to dig. The men sought work, the wives and children begged their way from door to door, often far afield, day in day out. The families were reunited in due course; if the husbands were not successful in the quest for work, or had not saved something appreciable—and labourers' wages were generally about 6d. a day—in order to pay the rent, the landlord-farmers seized the little crops; and the winter stories of the families concerned can be imagined. Father Mathew drew a similar picture of the working and wandering fortunes (and misfortunes) of Cork peasants at a later stage—before the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Colonization from Ireland, 1847.

It has just been noted that labourers' wages came to 6d. a day, but they were sometimes much less: 2s. to 2s. 6d. a week on an average according to the Commissioners on the Condition of the Irish Poor, 1835. Maurice Fitzgerald, Knight of Kerry, told the Select Committee of the British Parliament on the Irish Labouring Poor, 1819, of the intense anxiety of the peasantry to procure work. Hundreds of Kerrymen hired themselves as labourers in Limerick at 4d. a day, many even at 2d. a day, in short for anything that would purchase food enough to keep them alive for the ensuing twenty-four hours. When able to obtain labour by "task" they often utterly overworked themselves. The south-western peasants carried

sea-ore and calcareous sands many miles inland. In cases where the mountains were steep, and roads not yet opened, they still bore those manures on their backs for two or three miles to their little holdings.

In 1820, the year after the Select Committee reported, there was a famine, so-called, that is to say, devastating hunger in a hard-working and productive nation (though not nearly so productive as it might have been) where the produce for the most part did not go to the producers. In 1823 there was another Select Committee on the Labouring Poor, with further pitiful pictures. The most expressive evidence on the whole was that of Robert Owen, who had visited Ireland the previous year. He showed what was radically wrong with the Irish industrial situation—want of due development, agricultural and manufacturing, through voluntary co-operation on equal terms for the producers—as will be indicated more fully in the next chapter. A good deal was said by different witnesses regarding the linen manufacture, which had been introduced into widely-separated parts of the country—Clonakilty and Mayo amongst them—and had brought a measure of prosperity and entire tranquillity in its train. On its older ground in Ulster, Denis Browne, M.P., said the folk were great bleachers. Every man worked in his house, and no member of the family was unemployed. The wife and the elder daughters worked at spinning, and the children at filling quills. "Go into a weaver's house, and

you will see a general system of industry, but there is no such thing as a great manufactory, such as you have in this country,"—which large manufactories Mr. Browne did not like. Those busy home manufacturers had their comfortable little holdings, and there was tenant-right in Ulster. But in a dozen years, as we shall see later on, the Ulster idyll, too, had been shattered.

We have seen how severe were landlord-farmers with families that after long working and begging could not pay the rent of their plots. In some cases the farmers let land to labourers on condition that the rent would be paid in labour. They set the highest possible value on the land and the lowest possible value on the labour. In many instances where the labourers remained in their own districts working for farmers, the wives and children, in order to make ends meet, would go away on begging bent, in a scarce summer, though there was the greatest reluctance to begging if it could be avoided. There was always a number of unhappy widows and children who had no resource but to beg year after year. Many labourers who did not rent small holdings for themselves took plots on the con-acre system. The desire for a little of the land was intense. The Census of 1831 gave the total of labourers as 1,131,715, of whom 564,274 were occupiers of land. Numbers of the labourers, as noted by Karl Marx, were but the smallest of the small farmers.

All over the country for considerable stretches of the summer and of the winter—often thirty

weeks in the year—the agricultural labourers were without wage-work. There were many places where the labourer could not count on more than one meal a day. Subsidiary home industries of the women realised very little. "A woman may still earn 1½d. or 2d. a day by spinning yarn, but I know that frequently they have not money to buy the flax," a clergyman told the commission that in 1835—6 inquired exhaustively into the state of the poor throughout Ireland. Credit was very commonly given, both in towns and by the farmers, to those who were out of work, but the consequences were often ruinous. "The most enormous interest is charged, and the labourer is thus very much depressed; many have been utterly ruined by such causes, and some have been thrown into gaol," a witness in the parish of Lifford, Co. Donegal, told the same commission. "The poor are in the habit of obtaining provisions on credit; I should rather say at the rate of the most unchristian usury," said Archbishop MacHale, who had gone to Tuam from Killala a short time before.

When we have tried to realise the condition of those thousands of labourers (sometimes small farmers) and their families, in their apologies for homes, or in their wanderings far afield, we turn to classes apparently a step higher in the social scale and come upon manifold misery anew. Many small farmers, and holders of farms not small, tenants-at-will as they were, were gradually forced into conditions as wretched

as those of the labourers, to whose ranks indeed they often permanently passed. (At the "best" of times some small holders were under the necessity of labouring for others at periods of the year.) The powers of the absentee landlords and their agents increased with the years. The English landlord was obliged to come to the support of his ejected tenants if they were reduced to pauperism, and the process of ejectment itself was expensive and tedious. The Irish landlord, who was under no obligation to the starving, was given by a succession of enactments the power of summary ejectment at a trifling cost. The passion for ejectment had been "stimulated by the late alteration in the franchise," said William Smith O'Brien in 1830 in a pamphlet unfolding his plan for the relief of the Irish poor by Westminster law—poor-law panaceas were the subject of burning controversy for seven or eight years after. "Stimulated by the late alteration in the franchise" was William Smith O'Brien's coldly delicate way of dealing with the sacrifice of the forty-shilling freeholders at the time of Catholic Emancipation (more or less). In those days of open voting at elections tenants were generally the obedient electoral followers of their landlords, who held over them, in the social way, the power of life and death. Everyone whose holding for rating purposes was valued at 40s. or over was entitled to a vote. The more voters the greater the political power and influence of the landlords; so small holdings found favour in their eyes. But

along with Catholic Emancipation went the sinister scheme of raising to £10 the rating value that gave the tenant the vote. The small holders were of electoral consequence to the landlords no longer. They were sacrificed by their leaders, partly in order that richer Catholics might be placemen. So, as William Smith O'Brien said, ejectments were stimulated -aye, with a vengeance. Clearances multiplied, further thousands of families were ruined, the over-crowded world of Labour received ever-new additions, a vast number perished from want, as others had perished in the preceding decade. As to the fate of ejected tenants in those years, take a picture or two from the evidence given by Bishop Doyle (J. K. L.) before the committee that inquired in 1830 into the condition of the labouring poor in Ireland:

". . . In other cases they wander about without a fixed residence. The young people, in some instances, endeavour to emigrate to America. If the family have a little furniture, or a cow, or a horse, they sell the latter and come into the small towns, where very often they get a licence to sell beer or whiskey. After a short time their little capital is expended, and they become dependent upon the charities of the town; they next give up their house and take a room, but at present many are obliged to take, not a room but what they call a *corner* in a house. . . . In all the suburbs of our towns, there are cabins, having no loft, of -suppose twenty feet long by twelve feet wide, with a partition in the centre. Now four of the

wretched families are sometimes accommodated in one small apartment of that cabin, and three families in the other, or little kitchen where the food is cooked and into which the door leads from the street. I have not myself seen so many as seven families in one of these cabins, but I have been assured by one of the officiating clergymen in the town that there are many instances of it. . . . Then their beds are merely a little straw, strewed at night upon the floor. . . . In these abodes of misery disease is often produced by extreme want. Disease wastes the people; for they have little food, and no comforts to restore them. They die in a little time."

Labour organization in those pitiful and desperate circumstances in rural Ireland was necessarily a matter of extreme difficulty. Furthermore the capitalistic and professional parties had sedulously spread the theory of the criminality and folly of combination by the workers (which, even in the simplest form, was illegal under British law, as it had been under the Irish Parliament). It would seem that the feeling was part of their being. It is not easy in this generation to realise the placid stolidity of the conviction amongst the comfortable classes that the workers' duty was submission in the mass, isolation as units. Bishop Doyle, like most other churchmen, took a similar attitude. Strong-minded and independent as he was in regard to sundry issues, political and theological, he had no comprehension, apparently, of the rights of the workers. In a pastoral de-

nouncing Ribbonmen in 1822 he charged them, amongst other things, with being men without money or education; he upbraided them specially for their outbreaks at a stage when their fatherly British Sovereign was on a visit to the country, and when England was extending the mantle of her charity over Ireland. To that committee of 1830, before which he gave so terrible a picture of the fate of the ejected, he still declared his general agreement with the policy of the "consolidation" of farms—sub-division had gone to extremes—but he believed that provision should have been made for those evicted (some landlords allowed them to settle on and reclaim tracts of mountain). He was emphatic on the evil of combination in general. He gave an illustration which may be mentioned at this stage, though it dealt with town workers, not those on the land. The week before he left home, he said, he was on a visit to the Catholic Bishop of Ossory. A fund for the relief of the poor was to be disposed of, and there was a question of setting the unemployed weavers to work. "It was the opinion, however, of those gentlemen then conversing that the combinations amongst that description of tradespeople were the chief cause of the almost total extinction of the blanket manufacture in Kilkenny . . . for as soon as they discovered that there was a demand for goods they immediately struck, and would not work unless for very high prices: hence the manufacturers were unable to enter into contracts lest they should be disappointed, or that too high wages would be

extorted from them, and the consequence was that the manufacture went down altogether." But what were the wages, and what were the manufacturers' profits? On these vital matters Dr. Doyle had nothing to say.

Ban and denunciation notwithstanding, rural Ireland as a whole, like a good deal of urban Ireland, refused to be convinced that combination was a crime. Rural Ireland had strong and stern elements as well as the woeful. It was an article of faith with the people that they had a right to the land of their fathers. Dealing with this fact before the committee of 1830 the Rev. Mortimer O'Sullivan considered that it was not due, or due entirely, to traditional feeling or consciousness; disturbing teachers must have been moving amongst the country folk. We would like to know more of those early and nameless Lalors. James Connolly in *Labour in Irish History* expresses the belief that the Ribbonmen were really an industrial trade union for the protection of labourers and cottier farmers. As to the title of those rural direct actionists Ribbonmen for a long time (in the thirties, for instance) were regarded as a northern association that arose out of hostility to the Orangemen, and a clear distinction was drawn between them and the Whiteboys, etc., whose aims and interests were mainly related to land and labour. But later on this distinction did not obtain. Connolly's theory, just noted, was both an official and a popular one in the first half of the nineteenth century. It was heard at the

Select Committee on the State of the Disturbed Irish Counties, 1832, and at other parliamentary inquiries. Sir George Cornewall Lewis, in his *Local Disturbances in Ireland*, 1836, gave a great many quotations from the parliamentary reports, accounts by inspectors-general, pronouncements of judges and magistrates on the Whiteboys and their procedure, and from these a certain sense of unity and coherence of design can be gathered. "The Whiteboy Associations," said Lewis himself, "may be considered as a vast trades' union for the protection of the Irish peasantry." Besides the protection of tenants it was stated at the parliamentary inquiries that local action was sometimes taken to prevent the lowering of wages, whether through the incoming of "strange" labourers or otherwise, while steps towards the lowering of church dues were yet another feature of the activities. "It is a protective union," added Lewis, "coolly, steadily, determinedly, and unscrupulously working at its objects, but sleeping in apparent apathy so long as its regulations are not violated." Gustave De Beaumont, who made first-hand studies of Irish conditions in the thirties, and showed a deeply sympathetic spirit but a discriminating and indeed a critical one on occasion—strongly condemning incidental Whiteboy cruelty—adopted some of Lewis's conclusions regarding the association in *l'Irlande, Sociale, Politique, et Religieuse*, first published in 1839. An English M.P., G. Poulett Scrope, who took an active interest in Irish land

and poor-law problems in the thirties and forties, characterised "the Whitefoot system" as "an association for enabling the *people* to live by their labour off the land of their country." Whiteboyism and other forms and effects of combination troubled and puzzled the austere poetical spirit of Aubrey de Vere. He had at the same time the superficial notions of the evils of "over-population" and of the necessity of emigration entertained by "political economists" and members of the possessing classes. He gravely told the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Colonization from Ireland, 1847, of "The Tendency of a very great Amount of over Population [M. De Beaumont believed that Ireland could support 25 millions of people] to abolish the very Idea of Property, making the People believe that the Produce of the Land belongs virtually to all on the Land, and that they have the Right to legislate as they think best as to the Mode of its Distribution."

Lalor himself could not have put the matter with more clarity than that bold peasantry who so shocked De Vere. He wondered, on the other hand, that the criminality of the social theories did not reveal itself in their faces. He naïvely told the same committee:

"I have known People who are notoriously great Leaders of White Boys in whose Countenance you could trace no Mark of Ruffianism; you could not have known by looking at them that they were evil-disposed Men."

There is nothing so delightful as that in the pronouncements of the once potent "common-sensible" political economist, Nassau Senior, much as combination weighed on his official mind. In his *Journals, Conversations, and Essays Relating to Ireland* we have the mood and attitude of the governing and grabbing classes, including the land-agents. Nassau could be critical of some of their views, but he shared their outraged feelings on the subject of combination and direct action, in town and country.

The popular titles of the defenders of the people's right to the land of their fathers, and to some measure of fair play thereon, were various—Whiteboys, Rockites, Whitefeet, Lady Clare's Boys, and so on—but the purpose and the methods appear to have been much the same in the main through the years. The theory of a thorough understanding throughout the country, on the part of the peasantry, and a complete system of organization, was put forward at the Select Committee of 1832. The methods were sometimes desperate, beyond doubt, but it was a desperate situation. No rights on the part of the land workers, Gaels with something of the traditions of centuries in their hearts, was admitted by the alien possessors; landlord might and legal system, armed force, and anglicised professional opinion were all against them. Furthermore they were under the ban of the bishops and priests, though the ecclesiastical orders took kindly to the anti-tithe crusade. Bishop Doyle, and priests of his

diocese, as shown by clerical evidence before the Select Committee of 1832, were in favour of the organizing of "respectable" civilian patrols, accompanied by some police and military, as a counterblast to the Whiteboys. Amongst other activities, it was suggested that they should call at night at the houses of suspected persons to see if they were at home. Dr. Doyle desired that the counter-associations should be armed in order to "terrify evil-doers," who should also be dismissed from their employment.

Such schemes were vain. In spite of the utter odds against them the rural direct actionists waged their daring guerilla struggle year after year. The grit and boldness of the peasantry form the most striking part of the record of those times. Under a human and Christian order, with the education and development for which they longed, they would have been splendid national assets. The fact of the crying need for such development, and its patent possibility, were admitted in even legal and landlord evidence to the Select Committee on "Disturbed Ireland" in 1832. Matthew Barrington, Crown Solicitor of the Munster Circuit, averred that public works of all descriptions, and improvement of waste lands, were wanted; in fact, he said, every estate in the south was in need of improvement; while a great deal of what ought to go to the comfort and sustenance of the tenant went to the landlord. The O'Conor Don was sure that poverty and want of employment were the causes of disorder; his toiling

fellow-countrymen were really an "easily contented people."

And all the time the most that the strongest spirits could do was to try vehemently and wildly to hold a portion of their own. Outside their own class they had no helpers. The political leaders had little industrial insight and no social philosophy deserving of the name. In Cork county, indeed, Fergus O'Connor made a popular appeal for a period, beginning in 1832, but under the sway of O'Connellism could effect no definite democratic result (if he was really a thorough democrat). Like Bronterre O'Brien and John Doherty (who began work in a cotton mill in Larne in 1809, at the age of ten, and went to Manchester in 1816) his life-work was to be at the other side of the Irish Sea. The politico-social Chartist movement, one of whose leaders, in his own unconventional fashion, he became, had a certain reflex action in Ireland.

It is curious and somewhat pathetic to notice that while leaders and politicians were socially insensitive or short-sighted some out of the legion of the long-forgotten pamphleteers of the twenties and thirties were conscious of the real problems and supreme importance of the peasantry. For example, the writer who under the unpromising pen-name of "Eight-Seven" published in 1827 an exhaustive survey entitled *The Prosperity of the Labourer the Foundation of Universal Prosperity*. He urged that one-half of the funds then applied to assuage misery would afford

effectual relief under a constructive policy. The labourers should have land and an outlet for their spare time in other industries. Mixed employment, partly agricultural, partly manufacturing, would become the best economist of time and health. As an illustration of the order he had in view—labourers working for themselves but not employing others—he pointed to Ulster:

"For the proof of this opinion I appeal to the linen merchants in the North of Ireland, who employ no weavers, but buy the webs of linen in the gray state, not from persons employing weavers but the weavers themselves, and who in many instances have small plots of ground whereon they raise provisions and flax, which flax goes through every process of manufacture in their own families; and indeed the consideration of the superior state of the north-country peasantry to that of any other in the empire deserves the especial notice of the political economist [not forgetting the security of land tenure in Ulster], and in a most peculiar manner of our own landowners. Almost universally they are remarkable for honesty in their dealings, punctuality in the payment of their rents, and manly independence in their spirits."

That happy Ulster order was soon, however, to be broken. The writer, amongst other things, favoured small factories scattered through the pleasant country, and was opposed to big capitalists and monopolists. In his *Antidote to Revolution*, issued in 1830, he noted that a portion

of the community was surfeited with wealth, a large portion on the other hand was plunged in hopeless poverty and destitution. As a result of the inequality and want of development workers suffered sorely, or were being sent out of the country as a charity to Canada: one factory alone at Celbridge shipped off 250 persons. The attitude of the rich classes was an ominous reminder of that of the French aristocracy before the first Revolution. Those who lived in luxury on the labour of others were warned of Etnas, and of eruptions to come.

For the greater part of the ensuing decade controversy burst and burned not over things that really mattered, but over the fancied panacea by poor-law. A poor-law scheme was regarded by sundry advisers as the want of the age, and the sovereign remedy for Ireland's ills. The commission of 1835 suggested constructive schemes and development, though it also set store by the superficial and mischievous project of assisted emigration. Its recommendations, good and not good, were ignored, English official counsels and notions prevailed, and the result was poor-law more or less after the English model—some of it hated by the English masses. In vain did Irish advisers, including Isaac Butt, raise voice and pen to protest that the want was true work and development not "workhouses" and stagnation. Instead of a saving scheme, recognising at once the ordeals, the wants, and the natural bent and genius of the people, Ireland was legislated into a dreary

absurdity. And commissions, select committees, and Coercion Acts came and went and came again in the old way.

Chapter III.

WILLIAM THOMPSON, ROBERT OWEN, AND RALAHINE.

None of the acknowledged leaders of the people in the twenties and thirties of the nineteenth century showed the least democratic spirit or any understanding of the Gaelic sense of co-operation. It is strange to find the light and leading in those dismal decades coming from the Irish landlord class on the one hand and from a sympathetic Briton or two on the other. Of this light and leading Ireland as a whole took little notice. Yet one theorist and one practical experiment showed the way to a supreme Labour movement, one of priceless worth to the nation as a whole.

One day in the early twenties, at a meeting of a literary society in the city of Cork an individual noted locally for his skill in debates on political economy descanted eloquently on the blessings of the unequal distribution of wealth. A man of large estates and possessions in the county, who had used his senses to some purpose, repudiated the arguments and conclusions at the time, and set himself to prepare for delivery before the society an address or essay dealing with the whole question in detail. As he worked at the problem he soon outgrew the limits of an essay for a society,

and—for the landlord was William Thompson—the result was the now historic volume, published in London in 1824, bearing the long title, *An Inquiry Into the Principles of the Distribution of Wealth most Conducive to Human Happiness, Applied to the newly-proposed System of the Voluntary Equality of Wealth.* The latter clause suggests his friend Robert Owen, who had come over to preach his famous doctrines in Dublin a couple of years before, and had interested a certain number of the wealthy in the idea of general co-operation and colonisation. He had submitted calculations showing that abundant means existed in Ireland to place the whole population in a state of high prosperity. One of those he impressed was the Clare landlord, John Scott Vandeleur, who in the following decade proposed the Ralahine colony. At the time of Owen's visit Vandeleur tried to establish a linen factory on his estate, but the labourers were averse from sedentary occupation, and misery, discontent, and tumult were rife—after one of the periodic hunger-plagues. Owen's ideas had no definite result at the time in Ireland. He felt that he could do nothing under the iniquitous land laws and the despotism that prevailed. We are told so by one of his biographers, Lloyd Jones—democrat and journalist born in Bandon in 1811—whose first ancestor with an Irish experience had fought at the Boyne under King William but whose father had taken part in the insurrection of 1798, seeking

shelter and service, after Lord Edward's arrest, in the hills of Wicklow.

Owen in 1823, before the Select Committee on the Labouring Poor in Ireland, gave exhaustive illustration of how industrial communities, on the basis of equality of opportunity and equal sharing of the wealth produced, could be created in the country. Ireland's population was redundant as things stood; it would be too small, he declared, under the arrangements proposed and the spacious new opportunities. It was redundant because of the misapplication of the industry of the Irish people. He gave elaborate details of procedure and operations, both in regard to land work and allied industries. In each co-operative community there would be not more than 500 individuals, who would set themselves to produce a full supply of the first necessaries of life. The community would have sufficient land to render it essentially agricultural, but equal to the necessary allied industries. The dwellers would have a pleasant village in or about the centre of the land, the streets forming the four sides of a square, the public buildings in the centre of this, the manufactories beyond the gardens surrounding the village. The management would be in the hands of a committee and sub-committees of the people, the workers. Wool, flax, and leather, the native materials, would form the basis of the manufactures. There were elaborate estimates and details, as to essential industries and products, points as to the fittest physical and intellectual education of the children,

notes in regard to procedure and progress generally. A government loan of from five to eight millions would secure and establish communities sufficient to settle and train all the unemployed and uneducated in Ireland; that they would give an admirable account of themselves in favourable circumstances Owen had no doubt whatever. Like all native and foreign observers with knowledge and insight, he was emphatic on the social and mental possibilities of the people. He gave an account of his happy experiences with apparently crude human personalities in Lancashire and New Lanark. In reply to the conservative criticism that folk of superior and inferior talents would be equally rewarded under his project he replied that superior talents would have superior enjoyment thereof. His evidence altogether would fill more than a third of this volume.

The committee in its report dismissed his main proposals and ideas as "visionary." His theories of equality of treatment, his belief that poor labourers, if trusted and treated as co-operative units, would give a noble account of themselves, were against all experience of human depravity, said that committee of complacent pessimists.

So much for Owen. William Thompson, starting from the fact that it is not the mere possession of wealth but the right distribution of it that is important to a community, emphasized the truth that labour is the parent of wealth, and that the object of distribution ought to be to procure the greatest possible quantity of happiness for

those who produce it. Sufficient stimulus should be given in the way of motives to make Labour most efficient in the production of wealth. The strongest stimulus would be security in the free direction and entire use of the products, while voluntary exchanges of these products would increase happiness. Therefore no part of the produce of labour ought to be taken from any producer without an equivalent which he deems satisfactory. Labour includes knowledge, the quantity of knowledge requisite for its direction, by the productive labourer himself or another. Thompson expounded in great detail this doctrine of Labour's right to what it produced, and answered at length all the popular objections to the system of voluntary equality—his teaching was based throughout on the voluntary principle. He inveighed with force against the unequal treatment of women, and exposed the manifold evils of the competitive capitalistic system. The pith of his industrial gospel consists of the three points—Labour ought to be free and voluntary; all the products of labour ought to be secured to the producers thereof; all exchanges of these products ought, like Labour itself, to be free and voluntary. He saw that under the system which obtained around him, the capitalists, having all legislation in their hands, took the difference between the bare necessities of the worker and the produce of his labour, looking on it as surplus value belonging of right to the owners of land or capital. Rent and interest were forced abstractions from the

produce of labour, the spoils of the landlords and capitalists who had the monopoly of political power. The whole system ought to be reconstructed, and voluntary socialist communities on the Owenite plan were the means and the way.

His work has played a prime part in the making and moulding of industrial philosophy. Dr. Anton Menger in his illuminating historical and critical study of the theory of the Right to the Whole Produce of Labour (*Das Recht auf den vollen Arbeitsertrag*) calls him the most eminent founder of scientific socialism. Dr. Menger studies the contradiction between the principle of the individual labourer's right to the whole produce of his labour and that of united Labour's right to the whole produce of its labour—which of course are very different things—and points out that Thompson really followed the second of the principles, which means in practice distribution according to needs. Organised Irish Labour has the same ideal. It would be manifestly impossible in modern circumstances to determine the exact extent of the individual worker's produce, so interdependent are we; and in the co-operative community youth, the aged, the sick, the infirm would be willingly accorded the full essentials of subsistence (in the largest sense) by the actual producers: " to each according to his needs, or hers." When Labour has its due one of its joys will be that of giving.

The pity in regard to Thompson was that he deferred too long the idea of putting his theory

into practice in Ireland. As we shall see he was deeply interested in the Ralahine experiment, but his fellow-landlord, John Scott Vandeleur, was more decisive, and was the means of leading to practical good while looking keenly to his own interests. In 1831 he determined to try the long-cherished scheme of a co-operative farm on his estate of some 600 acres (about one-half under tillage) at Ralahine, Co. Clare, midway between Ennis and Limerick, and three miles from Newmarket-on-Fergus. E. T. Craig, a young man of 27, and a friend of Owen, was the individual he induced to undertake its direction. Craig was deeply imbued with the co-operative sense; he had already travelled in Ireland and had studied Irish wants and ways in a thoughtful spirit. He had no illusions, however, on the subject of the undertaking. Clare was in a frenzied state, consequent on clearances, hunger, savage repression, and the impassioned resistance of "many in whose hearts (he says) famine had written fiend," as well as less outraged spirits who were in unceasing revolt against the system which turned the toilers' lands into pastures. "Lady Clare's Boys" were abroad of nights, the spirit of fight and vengeance had reached Ralahine, and after the murder of a despotic steward the family of Vandeleur had fled to Limerick. Craig at the outset was regarded as a spy in quest of evidence of the steward's murderers, and his desire to learn some Irish, and so become on more intimate terms with the folk, was considered a sure sign of the plotter. He perse-

vered, however, and the initial difficulties were surmounted, though it was not easy to draw the people at the outset from their wretched homes to a scheme of associated labour and bright living. A start was made in November, 1831, with twenty-one adult single men, seven married men and their wives, five single women, four orphan boys, and three orphan girls under seventeen, five infants under nine: fifty-two souls in all. The admission of new members was to be by ballot, after a week's trial. No individual, it was agreed from the first, was to act as a steward; all were to work in accordance with their tastes and capacities.

The body was constituted as the Ralahine Agricultural Co-operative and Manufacturing Association. Its objects were: 1, acquisition of a common capital; 2, mutual assurance of members against the evils of poverty, sickness, infirmity, and old age; 3, the attainment of a greater share of the comforts of life than the working-classes then possessed; 4, the mental and moral improvement of its adult members; 5, the education of their children. For the attainment of these objects the persons who signed the rules agreed to associate together and to rent the lands, manufactories, machinery, etc. from John Scott Vandeleur on stated terms, and bound themselves to obey a series of regulations. The stock, implements of husbandry, etc. were to remain the property of Vandeleur till the society acquired sufficient to pay for them. They were then to become its joint property.

The members engaged that whatever talents they individually possessed, whether mental or muscular, agricultural, manufacturing or scientific, should be directed to the benefit of all, as well by their immediate exercise in all necessary occupations as by communicating their knowledge to one another, and particularly the young. As far as could be reduced to practice each individual undertook to assist in agricultural operations, particularly in harvest. All the youths, male and female, were bound to learn some useful trade, together with agriculture and gardening, between the ages of nine and seventeen. No member was expected to perform any service or work save such as was agreeable to his or her feelings and within the measure of his or her capacity. All the services performed usually by servants were to be done by the youths of both sexes under the age of seventeen, either by rotation or choice.

Each agricultural labouring man was paid 8d. per day, and each woman 5d., which might be raised to 10d. and 6d. respectively. The proceeds, it was expected, would be laid out at the store for provisions or any other articles the society might produce or keep therein. (The secretary, storekeeper, smiths, joiners, and a few others, received something more, the excess being borne by the proprietor). The above were the district rates, and the arrangement was designed to be merely temporary, so as to regulate prices and domestic arrangements and prepare for a higher social condition. Provision was made for a sharing of net

profits, after paying rent and interest. It was intended to place all on an equality as to the means of enjoyment. Owing to associated living (in large measure) and the moderate rates at which necessaries could be obtained, there was considerable saving in various directions. (A labourer was charged 1s. a week for as many vegetables and as much fruit as he could consume; milk was 1d. a quart, beef and mutton 4d. a lb.; 6d. a week for rent and 2d. for fuel were the charges to married members occupying separate dwellings.) A system of labour notes, received as currency at the store, was in operation from the first.

Systematic arrangements for education were set on foot. No gaming was allowed, nor any spirituous liquors. No individual could keep a four-footed beast or poultry. Any dispute was to be referred to the members, the decision of the majority to be binding on the parties. Perfect liberty of conscience and religious worship, and freedom in the expression of opinion, were decreed from the start.

A guiding committee of nine was chosen half-yearly by ballot of all adult male and female members. There were sub-committees for departments: agriculture and gardening, manufactures and trades, commercial transactions, domestic economy and education. The appointments of the members to work were made by the committee, which met every evening to arrange the business for the following day. Every member had a number, and labour directions were written on slates—ruled

and numbered to correspond with the members' numbers—which at the close of the committee's business were set in conspicuous places on the walls in the public dining-room. Each member examined the labour directions to ascertain his work for next day, and next morning all went quietly to the tasks arranged for them. Should weather or unforeseen circumstances require individual alterations during any day members of the committee acted as sub-committees and made appointments to suit the emergency. Every adult member could make suggestions in a book provided for that purpose. The suggestion-book was read aloud each evening before the committee made appointments for the following day. The whole suggestions and answers were also read aloud by Craig as secretary at the weekly meeting of all the members, to show that due attention had been given to every point. A healthy public opinion was formed and a sense of self-reliance and confidence created in workers whose opinions had so long been ignored or despised. Once the general scheme was understood and in working order there was unbroken illustration of an astonishing change to zest and harmony. Free, cheerful, contented the labourers soon did admirable work—the aim indeed was to make everyone a steward in effect, and it succeeded.

The annual rent, paid in kind to Vandeleur, was a heavy tax on effort: 320 barrels of wheat, 240 of barley, 50 of oats; 10 cwt. of butter, 30 of pork, 70 of beef. Furthermore, the society was to

supply him with hay at 30s. a ton, and there were minor arrangements. There was no anxiety as to prices, owing to the rent being paid in kind. The great object was to crop as much of the land as possible—somewhat less than half the estate was under tillage at the start.

The "new system" succeeded beyond all expectations and hopes. The effect on Ralahine and the neighbourhood was revolutionary. The hungry, harassed, hopeless toilers became industrious, resourceful, fraternal, and joyous. The social evenings merrily rounded off the eager days. The countryside, sullen and sceptical at first, came to wonder and admire. The second year saw eighty-one individuals in the colony. The members accepted with delight the first reaping-machine introduced into Ireland. The bread from the new wheat grown at their doors on the farm was a novelty and a mystery to people long accustomed only to the potato.

The fame of the experiment went abroad. Lord Wallscourt adopted portions of the plan with marked success on 100 acres of his estate in Galway. Visitors came from afar to study the new life of Ralahine.

William Thompson came. He was gratified by what he saw, and specially pleased with the simplicity and economy of the social arrangements. Craig, who had known him in England, says in the *History of Ralahine*, written in his old age, that there never was a man more under the control of reason and reflection. He describes him

as not strong physically, with little muscular power, of slender frame, medium-sized head, with a well-balanced brain and a sanguine-nervous temperament. For twenty years he had avoided all intoxicants and animal foods. He told Craig that he would leave his property for the establishment of an association somewhat similar to that of Ralahine. Unfortunately he died in 1833 and his will, after long litigation, was overborne by relatives who had no sympathy with industrial co-operation. He had delayed his scheme too long.

Robert Owen came also. He was pleased with Ralahine as an excellent beginning in difficult circumstances. He himself was to embark on colossal co-operative schemes in Britain a little later—schemes for which Britain was not at all ready—to capture the trade union movement for a time, and to set alarmed capitalists doing their worst. The result was failure, for a variety of reasons. Owen was a considerable influence in his day, with practical achievements to his credit, but his earlier ideas and projects would have had a much fairer field in Ireland than in Britain, for in Ireland the co-operative spirit was in the blood and nature of the people.

The end of the Ralahine colony, even as all went well and happily, was sudden and startling. Vandeleur's gambling debts, flight, bankruptcy, were the agents of fate after just two years of success. There was no tenant-right in Clare in those days; the agreement was not accepted as a

legal document; the members were held to be common labourers with no rights, no claims for improvement. As Craig says, they were remorselessly evicted. Yet something of the new spirit remained in the countryside for a whole generation.

The Ralahine way, which so pointedly belied the pessimists of the select committee of 1823 was in accordance with the people's needs and genius. Applied generally—with the factor of Gaelic education which it lacked—it would have saved Ireland decades of deterioration, varied by disaster and horror. Thereafter the labourers were left on the whole to serfdom, Craig as an old man protesting against their virtual neglect so late as the coming of the Land Act of 1881. And not till yesterday did labourers themselves come to think of demanding to be made co-workers instead of farm-slaves.

Chapter IV.

OUR EARLY TRADE UNIONISM.

We turn to movement and struggle in city scenes. Our early trade unionists have been represented as selfish, violent, criminal, powerfully organized, a terror to employers, enemies to Irish industrial interests and development. So ran the story for decades, in press and parliament and pamphlet, as presented by employers and those who sympathised with them, which in this matter, in the first half of the nineteenth century (and indeed much later) was almost the whole professional element and what passed for "public opinion" generally. Trade unions for a long time had been legally banned—under Irish statutes before the Union, under British statutes then and later—the "higher classes" and the "middle classes" did their utmost to ensure that they were morally banned in addition. Combination in the social order was deemed a deadly sin, and the trade unionist was painted by the possessing classes as a mixture of criminal fool and outlaw.

As to what he really was in the twenties and earlier a great deal of light was afforded during the proceedings of the Select Committee of the British Parliament that inquired in 1824 into questions connected with artizans and machinery and the laws against combinations of workmen.

The story was no longer one-sided, it was many-sided. Evidence was given by Dublin workers of different crafts, by Dublin employers, by the Lord Mayor, by the "chief constable at the head police office," as well as by the solicitor who in a long course of years had often acted for the men. Out of the candour and variety we can extract reality.

The doings of the Carpenters' Society were told in detail by Patrick Farrell, working carpenter, and Acheson Moore, a carpenter who had come to be a working employer. They had been deputed by the society to present a petition against the anti-combination laws and to declare how these laws affected wage-earners in Dublin. The society contained between 400 and 500 members, and there were still from 200 to 300 carpenters in the capital who were outside it—"colts" was the contemporary term for such non-society men, a trouble with all the trades. The association had existed for upwards of sixty years—that is, from 1764—and had 23 rules: of the salient ones, reviewed by the committee, more anon. Its purposes were the support of the sick, burying the dead, providing for widows, educating apprentices, raising funds when litigation arose between employers and employed, and (mainly) regulating the wages the members were entitled to receive.

Four general "fields," or meetings at a safe distance beyond the city, were held every year to consider all the interests of the society, the shops as a whole being summoned to attend. The "fields" took place on St. Stephen's Day, Easter

Monday, Whit Monday, and the first Sunday in August. The members in general were to the fore on those special days and everything conducive to the welfare of the trade was discussed. Wages regulations, shops in a refractory state, general grievances, all came up for treatment. Why were the meetings held in open fields beyond the city? "We consider the combination laws are so strict against them they [the members] would be taken up by the police, and the numbers are so great sometimes they could not meet in any room." On occasion, though seldom, watchers were set to guard against surprise. Five officers were chosen to conduct the affairs of the society till the next assembly: one each for Munster, Ulster, and Connacht, two for Leinster. This Council of Five met on Sunday and Wednesday nights to receive subscriptions and hear complaints as to troubles in the trade. The admission fee—for anyone who had served seven years in the house-carpentering business—was two guineas as a rule.

We come to the salient rules. No carpenter was to work for less than 4s. 4d. a day within the limits of the Grand and Royal Canals, nor for less than 5s. a day (owing to want of accommodation and to additional expenses in the suburban villages) outside of said limits, or ten miles from the Castle of Dublin. No Dublin member could take an apprentice, except son, brother, or nephew. No workingman's boy should work under the stipulated wages, ranging from 7s. 7d. after the first year to 21s. 8d. after the sixth,

but "when the boy is of small size it does not tie him down to wages: he has what he can earn." No master carpenter was to keep more than three apprentices. The society itself was required to bind four orphan boys every year and to give an apprentice fee of ten guineas for each. A rule with a moral significance provided that any member of the council who was known to have been intoxicated should be fined from 5s. to £1, as the majority of the "field" might think proper. The rule was strictly enforced, and the working witness remembered "a good many" instances of its application—he was then, be it noted, rather old. Under another internal and moral rule any member resisting a decision, so that shopmates were obliged to turn out, that is to say strike, against him, was fined £1 14s. 1½d., which suggests a very delicate weighing of his guilt, while any member who replaced another on strike was fined £3 8s. 3d., or double the penalty exacted in the other case: an interesting consideration for industrial moralists.

Any member, on proof of his discharge from three different employments for inability, might get indulgence to work for what wages the council and his shopmates considered he was worth. Any member on exceeding 50 years of age got similar liberty to work for the wages the council and his shopmates believed to be just. At 60 he received a free ticket—he was entitled to all the benefits of the society without being bound by its rules or making any payment to its funds. A member

turning out for non-payment of his wages should not be replaced by another under penalty of £1 2s. 9d.—unless the man had been guilty of any offence against his employer. There was a special rule against the taking of piece-work where men were employed by the day. It was explained to the committee that the prices for piece-work in the trade were too low in Dublin. In the cases of some contractors expert workmen could not earn ten shillings a week at piece-work.

Every new member was obliged to take an "oath" before the Council of Five to the effect that he would obey the rules and would not divulge what passed at meetings. Owing to the rigour of the laws against combination all this was deemed an absolute need. He took a prayer-book in hand, heard the rules read, promised to abide by them, and kissed the book. Mr. Moore told the committee that he had had great difficulty in undertaking to abide by the latter part of the declaration—as to what might thereafter be made for the better regulating of the trade. Binding a man to something that was to come disturbed him.

He and his carpenter comrade, like their colleagues, had been appointed to attend the select committee at a meeting in Dublin attended by delegates from forty-two trades or branches of trades, two delegates from each trade or branch, eighty-four in all. The woollen trade had several branches, there were two descriptions of hatters, and so on. It appeared from later evidence that

about twenty-five distinct trades, more or less important, existed in the capital. The gathering of delegates was known as an aggregate meeting. Such a rally had only been called on the occasion of a petition to Parliament, Irish or British. The carpenters could only recall two previous instances, one in consequence of a bill introduced into the Irish House of Commons, about 1789, they thought, and designed to reduce artizans' wages, as well as to enact that seekers for work should have "characters" from previous employers. Protesting workers assembled in the Phœnix Park, and marched thence with wands in their hands to the House of Commons. There were from 15,000 to 20,000 men in the procession. The bill was not passed.

It was mentioned that the house where the Council of Five met habitually was known to the employers as well as the police. Masters sent foremen there when they wanted additional men. The workers knew that the "field" meetings and others were against the law, but they had no other means of redress. They had lost all confidence in juries, which were usually composed of masters and other interested parties. As to enforcing rules against the employers they relied on the turn-out. Amongst the carpenters there had been no acts of violence till within the previous five years. Trouble and violence had come through the fact that a great deal of work—public work of the city and government work—was given by contractors to strangers. When the regular men were

well employed there was no disturbance. Many workers regretted the outbreaks of violence. "The regular men are so necessary the [general run of] masters do not like to discharge them, but those who have large contracts get any men, and it is with them we have disputes." Wages with the regular carpenters had been the same for twenty years, excepting a partial rise to 5s. a day from 1811 to 1816—the men had to obtain permission from the Recorder to make the demand for it. Carpenters had been prosecuted and imprisoned (for from six to twelve months) and fined in addition over an agitation for higher wages in 1806. But when in 1816 the price of provisions fell, the men without consulting the masters, made a reduction voluntarily, and told their employers on a Monday morning that they would go to work for 4s. 4d. a day, as half a decade earlier. They were not prosecuted that time for combination!

Here is an illuminating story which the carpenters told the committee. Alderman Thorp was a contractor about 1800. The master carpenters signified to the men that they thought it quite unfair the men should work for him at the prevalent rate of wages, as he had not been brought up to the business of a carpenter while they (the protesting masters) had served a regular apprenticeship to the work. The men asked 6d. a day extra from Alderman Thorp. It was refused, and the men were summoned for combination. Their law agent advised them not to appear. They were arrested in their beds and put into gaol,

but on being brought before a judge on a writ of *Habeas Corpus* they were released. The carpenter witnesses were asked if in case the anti-combination laws were repealed they would give up all rules and "leave the masters to employ whom they think proper, at what wages they think proper, consistently with the prices they get." "If it was left to what they think proper, in the city of Dublin, it would be very low indeed." It was added by way of illustration that the poor labourers "had no resistance amongst themselves" and the masters had got them so down that if the labouring man bought such a luxury as a pair of boots he would not be able to afford a grain of salt and a potato. Finally it was stated that no general union of trades existed in Dublin, save that one trade borrowed money from another on occasion, and that the carpenters had no connection with any society in England.

Charles Graham came to speak for the saddlers, whose association was known as the Halifax Society. It contained about eighty members. It had been instituted as a mortality society in 1791 and registered according to Act of Parliament. Its prime purposes were the provision of funds for supporting the sick and burying the dead. The contribution was 1s. 0½d. a week, 2d. of which was laid by to assist men in distress when out of work. Some of the other associations in Dublin, said Mr. Graham, were on the same footing—mortality societies—others were bodies to protect their trade interests alone. He described the routine of the

saddlers' body, told that wages ranged from 20s. to 28s. a week, and came to happenings of historical interest. In 1822, during wages negotiations, the master saddlers suddenly turned out forty men, and obtained, from coachmakers' lofts, etc., others who were incapable of doing the whole of the work: they could only make harness. Some of these supplanters were beaten. Eleven men who met the masters, on the invitation of the latter, "were arrested by them." The men had five of the masters summoned. The magistrates thought they were as guilty as the men, and directed them to find bail for their appearance at the quarter sessions. The grand jury "found" the employers' bills but ignored those of the workers. Finding themselves, in Mr. Graham's words, "at the mercy of the masters to prosecute us," they gave their law agent information of a conspiracy into which the masters had led the men the previous year. Mr. White, an army accoutrement maker in Grafton Street, obtained an order from the First Dragoons for accoutrements. Mr. White had not been in the habit of doing anything in the saddlery line, so the masters in the trade did not think it right that he should get anything to do therein, and they spoke to the workmen in the shops on the matter. They then asked that five of the men, Graham being one, should meet five of themselves. By promises that the men should be always employed, and by threats that any person who worked for Mr. White should not be in their service, the masters' representatives induced the others to

agree that the journeymen should not work for Mr. White. They accordingly left off working for him, and he had perforce to give up his contract. The masters had counted on getting it, but it was lost to the country altogether. (When the colonel heard White's account of his difficulties, he sent the work out of Ireland: he had indicated originally that White might have all such business.) White gave evidence when the masters were brought before the magistrates, and they were ordered to find bail to stand their trial. The prosecution was stopped on the understanding that the employers would not proceed with the other case against the men, so the bias of the grand jury was ineffective.

As to trouble and tumult in the saddlery world, these were caused, said Mr. Graham, through employers bringing inexperienced persons to work at lower wages than the regular men. This was especially the case on large contracts for government work.

"I do not think," he said in reply to a question, "that there is such a thing as a regular union of trades in Dublin. I have heard men say such a thing would be for their interest, but it never took place." The Halifax Society had no communication with other trades for trade purposes. They had once borrowed money from another trade in Dublin to support men out of work and had partly repaid the amount at that period. Men were afraid to meet even at the invitation of the masters lest they should be arrested. Even as to the

petition (against the anti-combination laws) presented to the select committee, they had to give notice to the police magistrates every day they met to consider it. The anti-combination laws had been making the (usual) meetings of the workers more secret than ever, and were the cause of the oaths of secrecy. As to apprentices in the saddlery trade there was no restriction in the country. In Dublin their trade and all other trades were becoming overstocked.

Christopher Leahy, cabinet-maker and son of a cabinet-maker, was the spokesman for that once great Dublin industry. The cabinet-makers had had an association as long as he had experience or could trace the tradition of the trade. It was called the Samaritan Society, and had eighty or ninety men that year. It was not a benefit society: it was solely for trade purposes. It had no printed rules or regulations, simply a few written ones: no man was allowed to work among them unless he had served seven years' apprenticeship; no employer was to take more than two apprentices; the men were not permitted to work under the particular rates of the town. The only oath taken was to the effect that the men had served seven years' lawful apprenticeship. After the passing of the late Act affidavits were generally sworn in the crown office. The fine for breaking the regulations was £1 or more. If unwilling to pay, the offender might leave the society and go into a black shop, but after a year or two, desiring to find work in a good shop, he would perforce

have to pay the fine at last. Many Scotsmen and Englishmen worked at the trade in Dublin.

As to wages, in 1801 there was a meeting of journeymen and employers who agreed to a book of prices under which an ordinary cabinet-maker would earn about £1 10s. 0d. a week—piece-work was the order. The scheme obtained till about 1816 when, owing to the depression of trade, the men thought that there ought to be a reduction in their rates. They called a general meeting of the journeymen, who agreed to a reduction of 2s. 6d. in the pound on their prices. The average weekly earnings were then from 20s. to 24s. Afterwards there crept in men who had not been brought up to the business, and these would take anything they could get. With good workmen along with them in the shops they gradually improved. By 1824 the rates were 4s. 2d. in the pound under those for journeymen in London.

The cabinet-makers, like others, had had special experience of the danger of negotiation. An employer named Scott had no journeyman, the work being done by twenty-two apprentices. Some were severely treated by him and left his service. He suspected that the association was concerned in the matter. Negotiations were started, in the course of which he told the men that he was well aware his action tended to ruin the trade, but he did not care; he would make enough money on which to retire, and he would not bring up a son to the business; so he could afford to be indifferent. His next step was to have the negotiators, the repre-

sentatives of the men, arrested. Terms of imprisonment along with fines were the result. Those who were unable to pay suffered an additional month in prison, the society allowing £1 5s. 0d. a week for support in each case. A happier experience of masters came to pass when on the occasion of a general meeting the chief constable apprehended the men. Their employers came forward to bail them. These apparently recognised the justice of the point put forward on occasion by the society: that if it defended journeymen's interests against the masters it also defended the interests of the latter against unjust journeymen. Many masters on receiving journeymen's bills sent them to the society's committee to be taxed. In one case mentioned by Mr. Leahy between two and three pounds were knocked by the committee off a bill of about £8. But some few masters were too haughty to have such dealings with the cabinet-makers.

Mr. Leahy's theory as to the cause of violence on the part of cabinet-makers in some of the disputes with the employers was a little contradictory. The apprenticeship fee in the trade was £100, which meant in practice that "respectable" folk became cabinet-makers. Respectable and educated young men did not like the notion of their names getting into the papers in connection with clash and trouble (to say nothing of prison for their persons) so they shrank from accepting official posts, which therefore went to the uneducated, who knew no resource but violence. But the appren-

ticeship of each of those leaders had presumably cost £100 also, so they, too, ought to have reached the "respectable" altitude!

In Dublin, said Mr. Leahy, the trades were oppressed and troubled all round, the coachmakers and one or two others excepted. The committee of the coachmakers had told him to say that they had no complaints and no quarrels. It was sadly different with the cabinet-makers. They met difficulties on all sides. If they took disputes about wage-bills to the Lord Mayor's Court, as he did not understand them he referred them to other masters! There was no real arbitration. The trade, too, was overstocked. Some masters took a number of poor boys to whom they gave no wages for two or three years of their time, and when out of their time they found the trade so full that they were obliged to emigrate.

Employers gave evidence before the select committee, some of them throwing but little light on the industrial situation in Ireland. Edward Carolan, senior, a master carpenter and builder, had been at one time (for a year) a member of the carpenters' association. He handed in their book of rules and was questioned thereon, but the questions and answers were not nearly so full or so revealing as when the same subject came up in the examination of Acheson Moore and Patrick Farrell. He referred briefly to the "field" meetings. His own firm employed on an average 168 men, and sometimes when he had trouble he secured workers from England and Scotland, pay-

ing them higher wages. Once when non-unionists in his employ were violently attacked, he fired pistols loaded with ball and shot, wounding four or five of the attacking party, one of whom was a tailor. There were bayonets on the firearms, and after firing he struck out with the bayonets, fatally wounding a man named MacDonnell. He himself was prosecuted for murder, the expenses of the prosecution being borne by the journeymen carpenters; but he was acquitted. He mentioned that the carpenters' books had been seized in 1820; they showed that the total amount received in seven months—in sums of from 10d. to £1—was £440 2s. 1½d.; the expenses of attornies, lawyers, surgeons, clerk, bail, committee business, imprisonment, and for men going to the country to prevent prosecutions, came in the same period to £342 10s. 7d. Mr. Carolan believed that all trades in Dublin had associations, but the master carpenters did not unite. "The masters are not the masters," he averred. The anti-combination laws in his view were ineffective. "The men have got so refractory I do not know how to make them amenable to the laws." But he admitted that the wages, 4s. 4d. a day, were "little enough."

Obadiah Willans, described as a woollen manufacturer from the neighbourhood of Dublin (also of Leeds) had had one experience of a turn-out or strike. It was over the lowering of wages and was successful. Jeremiah Houghton, woollen manufacturer, of Celbridge, thought that as a

result of combination wages were higher in Ireland than in England. He believed that £20, £30, and even £40, a week had been contributed by his operatives for the support of Willans' men when on strike. "There is in Ireland what is called an union of trades, and it is the practice of the trades, I believe, to support those trades that are out of employment." He considered the anti-combination laws "inoperative." The woollen operatives received three or four times the wages of the peasants. Mr. Houghton's picture of the proceedings of the woollen unionists was this: One or two from every factory assembled at some inn, where they had a green cloth upon the table, with paper, pens, and ink before them, and proceeded in their business with great regularity. They summoned offending members before them, and for any violations of the laws of the society inflicted fines of anything up to £1. Mr. Houghton could only have spoken of such things from hearsay. The table and the green cloth came in the course of time to loom larger and greener in the visions of Dublin trade unionism from the capitalist point of view. The fateful board was clothed with a more sinister green decade after decade. It was the centre not of the woollen conspirators alone, but of all trade unionism. The plotters, the terrors from all the trades, who sat around it in the watches of the night, were no longer satisfied with the simple fines up to a sovereign that seemed bad enough to Mr. Houghton. They were out for spoil and rapine and blood. They made tyrannous rules,

decided on iniquitous demands, planned the laying low of offending "colts" and masters. And murderous men, with eyes as red as the cloth on the board was green, were ever ready at hand, thirsting to carry out their right devilish behests. That sort of fantastic melodrama has actually passed in later days for history!

We go back to our Select Committee. Mr. Michael Farrell, "chief constable at the head police office," said that every trade in Dublin, fifteen or sixteen altogether, had its separate club or committee. These were elected every quarter and met two or three times a week. There was not a regular union of trades, but there was a private understanding amongst them. If unlawful men ("colts") were getting into trades, or men were working under price, meetings of different trades were called to deal with them—confidential men were sent round to the committees. Offenders, the constable declared, were waylaid and beaten; tailors, he believed, being often active in the bad work; tailors were a numerous body, with more unemployed than other trades. Witnesses of affrays or beatings were unwilling to come forward.

The numbers in each trade were unknown to Mr. Farrell. There were no religious tests or distinctions in the associations. As to the rules and regulations his information was somewhat superficial, in comparison with the details of the working witnesses. He believed that the societies had no great funds.

The chief constable, growing more positive on mental than on social matters, declared that the masters were in constant terror of the trades, a statement which was scarcely borne out by the evidence of the masters, to say nothing of the stories of the trade unionists who were examined. He made the further statement that no prosecution under the anti-combination law had taken place for fifteen years in Dublin: a serious error, as noted by Christopher Leahy, the cabinet-maker, whose appearance before the committee was at a later stage.

According to Mr. Farrell, a few of the trades—such as the ironmoulders and foundrymen—were connected by correspondence with the English clubs; they had "a general correspondence throughout the empire." Tailors, curriers, hatters, and thick-set cutlers had no such correspondence (an intimate acquaintance with the secrets of their communications!) He noted that unemployed unionists were provided for by a system of "passes," through which when a man came to a town he obtained a night's lodging and —if he could not get employment there—as much as carried him on to the next town. Passes from England answered in Ireland, with the proviso that a man must not call at any one place a second time until six months had elapsed. Passes from Ireland, in the same way, answered in England.

Richard Smyth, Lord Mayor of Dublin, who next appeared, had no special information to impart, but he averred that "the state of society

among the working-classes in Dublin was truly alarming."

Exhaustive evidence was given by Mr. William Hall, solicitor, of Dublin, who had often acted for the men in the previous sixteen years. He said that there were twenty-five or twenty-six distinctive trades, with their branches, in the capital. Like the unionists, he averred that the " oaths " at entry were a result of the anti-combination laws and their penalties—there were no penalties against the masters for combining. A general code of anti-combination laws had been enacted by the Irish Parliament: meeting to regulate trade, being a member of any society for that purpose, having a ticket from such a society were amongst the offences. There were more "crimes" of that sort, a greater number of things were made " acts " of combination, under the Irish statutes than under the English ones, though they always considered the enactments of the Imperial Parliament more severe against combination than those of the Irish legislature. At a later stage he said that the penalties against the men were much more severe in Ireland than in England. He had known men to be publicly whipped in Dublin for simple acts against the anti-combination laws, acts unaccompanied by violence.

One trade would take up the cause of another, and attack individuals who broke the rules of the other trade. This was done to avoid discovery and punishment. It explained why tailors, for example, were militant against offending car-

penters. He told the story of White, the accoutrements, and the masters' plot, in detail. In general the disputes were not so much about wages as about the individuals employed. Wages would easily find their level in all the trades: the main trouble was with the "colts." He thought the most violent men came to the front as a rule as leaders, just because the best men did not care to take a lead in the councils, there being so many penalties under the law. (This, however, seems to mean that the men of grit came to the fore.) If the anti-combination laws were repealed better men would come forward. The masters would also be obliged to be more reasonable.

The rates of wages in three trades in Dublin—tailors, shipwrights, and silk weavers—were fixed by Acts of Parliament (Irish Statutes). Tailors and shipwrights had the power of presenting petitions to the Recorder and magistrates at quarter sessions, either to increase their wages or regulate their hours of work. By the last regulations tailors' wages were fixed at 4s. 6d. for the best men, 3s. 4d. or 3s. 5d. for the worst. Under the Act there was a penalty on the masters for paying them at a higher rate but none for paying them at a lower. Regulations had been evaded by both workers and masters. The latter brought in women to make waistcoats and other small articles, and thus got the work done much cheaper. About 1820 there was considerable trouble over the master's introduction of the women and irregular men, but the Act gave no

help in that regard, regulating only labour prices and hours of work. The tailors were a strong combination, unlike the silk weavers.

The nature of the Act was the same in regard to shipwrights as to tailors. There had been many disputes between shipwrights and masters, a very serious one three or four years before. There were not above sixty or seventy in Dublin; in his recollection there had been many more. There were many causes for the discontinuance of shipbuilding in Dublin: "want of capital and want of trade; the men were mostly gone away from it." He was asked: "Are you able to state whether it has principally left Dublin in consequence of disputes between the masters and men?" "Very much so (he replied); for there is a line of demarcation drawn between masters and journeymen generally; the masters will not treat with the men, they rely mostly on the Combination Law giving them great advantages, and will not bend at all to the men." Capitalist critics have tried to lay the whole blame for the ruin of shipbuilding in Dublin on the men.

As to the silk-weavers, they were regulated up to a point by an Act of similar tendency to that mentioned above. Their disputes with the masters (in regard to prices, width of pieces, and so on) were referred to the Royal Dublin Society. The number employed in the silk trade had increased of late, said Mr. Hall, and there was no immediate cause of complaint.

He passed to legal issues. When a case came

before the magistrates the simple oath of an employer that a man had quitted work, or had refused to work with particular men, was sufficient to convict him and subject him to six months' imprisonment. Men had been committed to prison, under the Combination Laws, by warrant from magistrates, on the oaths of the masters, though the men in question had never been before the magistrates at all. No personal service of a summons need be proved; proof of leaving it at the worker's place of abode twenty-four hours before the hearing, was enough. The workers generally lived in lodgings, wretched hovels many of them.

When the men did any act of irregularity they were summoned straight away. They often fled or hid, being afraid of the consequences under the law, one-sided as it was. They were "convicted behind their backs," and if caught were committed to prison. As to the alleged fear of witnesses to appear in prosecutions against workers, the truth was they often appeared, but generally refused to answer questions that would incriminate themselves.

Mr. Hall had frequently endeavoured to settle disputes between masters and men. He had gone with messages and discussed the differences. "I think," he said, "I could more easily reason with the men than with the masters; they are generally, I think, more intelligent and reasonable, and seldom refuse to come to a reasonable adjustment. The masters are more unreasonable because they stand on the high ground of the law, which is so

much in their favour." A summary mode of enforcing their contracts, a real scheme of arbitration, were wanted by the workers. If the anti-combination laws were repealed, the violence, which was terrible in Dublin, would pass away.

From all this we can form a tolerably fair conception of Dublin trade unionism in the twenties of the nineteenth century. (Of the trade unionists of Belfast, Cork, and other cities and towns our fuller information pertains to the next decade and after.) That old Dublin trade unionism, like a good deal of trade unionism even yet, did not exist to advance any particular industrial philosophy. It accepted the capitalist system in the main. Some of it was charitable and fraternal, of the benefit and mortality association order. More of it was defensive, violently defensive on occasion: in answer to violent aggression and tyranny on the masters' part. In the eyes of the men of law and property it had no right to existence even in its mildest phases of combination. It was banned and harassed, yet, as we have seen, it remained for the most part reasonable and human, with some racy traits. We might apply to it the phrase of Edmund Burke: its virtues were its own, its vices were forced upon it.

Even in Dublin in dark days the old Gaelic spirit of co-operation struggled to live and realise itself. In 1816 when the cotton industry was in a grievous state of decline, only 300 looms in that industry in the capital, no less than 200 of these were worked by weavers who had co-operated and

started work for themselves, obtaining funds from the institution known as the "Meath Loan." They had a depot for their products and a regular market in the Liberties. Gaelic workers in town and country, when they had even a little of their own way, were always able to show the vanity of the theory of the "human depravity" of toilers propounded by stagnant pessimists. They were practical idealists.

Chapter V.

THE GUILDS AND THE UNIONS.

After stormy history we may glance for a brief spell at a matter of more picturesque historical interest. As to the age of trade unionism in Dublin, and its relation to the old guilds or companies, historians have had much more to say than of the nature and struggles of that trade unionism itself. Sidney and Beatrice Webb in their *History of Trade Unionism* deal only in brief generalities, partly misleading and unjust, with the Dublin unions and unionists, but they devote a long appendix to the question of the unions' relation to the guilds. "The absolute impossibility (they say) of any passage of the Dublin companies into the local trade unions will be apparent when we remember that the bulk of the wage-earning population of the city are, and have always been, Roman Catholic. The Dublin companies were to the last rigidly confined to Episcopalian Protestants. Even after the barriers had been nominally removed by the Catholic Emancipation in 1829, the companies, then shrunk into little cliques of middle-class capitalists, with little or no connection with the trades, steadfastly refused to admit any Roman Catholics to membership. A few well-to-do Roman Catholics forced themselves in between 1829 and 1838 by man-

damus. But when inquiry was made in 1838 by the commissioners appointed under the Municipal Corporations Act, only half-a-dozen Roman Catholics were members, and the companies were found to be composed in the main of capitalists and professional men. There is no evidence that there was even one wage-earner in their ranks. . . . Whilst the Dublin companies were, until their abolition by the Act of 1840, in much the same condition as those of London, with the added fact of religious exclusiveness, the Dublin trade unions were long before that date at the height of their power. . . ." (After noting that societies like the Bricklayers, Carpenters, Painters, link themselves by coats of arms, mottoes, etc. to the old guilds, the authors add): "The Irish trade unionist, with his genuine love for the picturesque, and his reverence for historical association, has steadily 'annexed' antiquity, and has embraced every opportunity for transferring the origin of his society a few generations farther back."

In point of fact, as noted already in the case of the carpenters and other bodies, Irish trade unionism had a fairly respectable "antiquity." The authors of the *History of Trade Unionism* are mistaken in the assumption that Catholics were not legally eligible for admission to the guilds until 1829; they were made so by an Act of the Irish Parliament thirty-six years earlier. The guilds, however, it would seem, did not become either tolerant or progressive. Benjamin Pemberton, on becoming master of the Builders' and Plasterers' Guild in

1812, delivered a trenchant address to his colleagues, in which he expressed the hope of being able to rescue their "fallen and degraded" corporation from ruin. Party feeling had been allowed to pervade it; the majority of their fellow-tradesmen were debarred from it [nineteen years after the passing of the Irish Act]. It was only useful to those with a desire for city honours and attendant jobs. Their charter went back to the days of Charles II., but a motley tribe had come amongst them: a serjeant and counsel learned in the law, a long train of attornies and clerks, a coal factor, hosier, shoemaker, carpenter, and cutler. They might answer, said Pemberton, for electioneering purposes but no more. He strongly urged the admission of Catholics, also domestic developments, beginning with a bright and inviting hall ever open to their journeymen, and forming a happy centre for the craft as a whole. His plea was apparently unavailing, for twenty years later he dealt with the old uncured evils and made a new appeal. That same year the bricklayers of Dublin had a spirited statement from the committee they had appointed to report on their trade before and since the Union, a statement which also called the hopeless guild up for judgment. Incidentally it urged that the British masses should not be blamed for the misery brought about by British rule. In June of that year, also, there was a suggestive report from the stucco plasterers to a meeting of the Trades' Political Union. Before the Union of 1800, it said, there

were eighteen respectable employers in the trade, with an average of ten journeymen each; now there were only four employers, who could not keep more than three men each as a rule. Altogether there were only about eighty stucco plasterers, some of whom worked for themselves. Employment was uncertain and irregular, and the average wages only 14s. a week.

A Union of Bricklayers and Plasterers for the Attainment of their Corporate Rights and Privileges held its general meeting and made its rules and standing orders in March, 1833, but the "fallen and degraded" guild apparently made no response. Pemberton was the chairman of the new body. He was evidently a man with the reformer's spirit, catholic sympathies, and a love of art and beauty. But he could not save his guild or inspire it with the breath of progressive life. His crusade and his Union show, however, that there were workers eager to do what the guilds ought to have accomplished but left undone.

If Dublin guilds did not pass directly into the trade unions, the latter, long before the former wasted and were swept away, seized and embodied something of their older and stronger spirit, and continued it as a living and working entity in the Irish capital.

Chapter VI.

ILLUSIVE EMANCIPATION.

Trade unionism in Ireland and the neighbouring island began a new chapter of its history when, after the inquiry of 1824, the anti-combination laws were, up to a point, repealed. Combination on the part of workers was no longer illegal in itself, but the legislators endeavoured to ensure that it should only be combination of an ineffective character. Combination that exerted pressure on workers, inducing them to quit work, for example, was punishable by a term of two months' imprisonment. The possessing classes remained as hostile as ever to real trade unionism, as trade unionists were soon to learn. However, there was considerable development straight away, in both islands, in the matter of organizing and public activity by industrial forces. The ruling orders quite soon became alarmed. The very next year, 1825, another select committee was established to review the new perils and problems of the situation. Irish trade unionism was the subject of strong comment in the report and of special attention in the appendices thereto—Dublin police stories and statistics of assaults on "colts" looming large. In some of the sixty cases or so there had been convictions; in several others either the prosecutors had not appeared or had failed to

identify the accused persons; yet more of the cases were still untried. Much further material was mentioned as having come through the Home Secretary and the President of the Committee of Trade. The select committee apparently took the unchecked official and police information as authentic.

During the regular proceedings of the committee the Dublin coachmakers, who reported the previous year that they had no complaints and no quarrels, were the subject of grevious strictures by Robert Hutton, master coachmaker, who employed 222 persons. He had suffered much, he declared, from combination on the part of workmen. The previous September the coach-smiths objected strongly to his importation of English ready-made ironwork. He went on to tell of troubles as far back as 1813, when an Englishman he had installed was so badly beaten that he could work no longer, and still subsisted on a pension from the firm. Through the new facility of combination, said this disturbed employer, strikes in Dublin had never been so plentiful as in the previous twelve months. Since the repeal of the anti-combination laws two men had been murdered and a great many assaulted. The men, possessing more power, had succeeded in their demands more frequently. He admitted that there had been "acts of oppression on the part of masters." He also admitted that the wages for common manual labour was 60 per cent. lower in Dublin than in London.

Mr. Michael Farrell, chief constable, appeared again, and spoke of violent acts by nailers and others. He produced one of their alleged weapons of attack: a stick two feet long, very thick at one end, presenting three edges. The use of those articles, he urged, should be punishable by transportation. He testified that while the spirit of combination had been greater since the new Act permitting it had come into force the outrages had been less. The generality of the Dublin trades—sixteen or eighteen—were in a union, or alliance, and (the delegates) met at Kinsella's public-house in Exchequer Street. He said he had attended many of the meetings. The men openly avowed their objects and always declared against threats and violence. At the moment nearly all the carpenters and cabinet-makers of Dublin were on strike for higher wages. He believed the union of trades extended throughout Ireland. In the country parts very little violence arose through combination. In regard to his sources of information generally the chief constable was candid: "We have people who in this country would be called spies." He ended his tale with a piece of industrial history. The longest strike he had known had lasted six months: it was amongst the shoemakers, many years before.

Little or nothing came of that committee of 1825—beyond social history from the possessing parties' point of view. The struggle of the partly-liberated trade unionists continued to be waged on a wider scale in both islands, against an alarmed

and haughtily hostile exploiting class. The sufferings of the wage-earners on both sides of the Irish Sea were extreme. In Britain the Industrial Revolution grew apace, and capitalism waxed ever stronger, richer, more unscrupulous. Ireland felt the new forces of competition more and more, and to the wage-earners as ever fell the most cruel burdens. Trade unionism in Britain gradually came under Owenite influence. In the big efforts towards solidarity and social revolution in the next decade the Irish pioneer and journalist, John Doherty, played a strenuous part. It is curious to note that this earnest democrat based some of his methods on those of O'Connell, from whom he differed so radically in sympathy and outlook. He told the story himself some years afterwards in his evidence before the committee which was the outcome of O'Connell's attack on trade unionism, and of which O'Connell himself was a member. In reference to the movement for the combination of trades which followed the defeat of the British cotton-spinners in 1829, it was then shown, he said, that no individual trade could stand against the combined masters of that trade; it was therefore sought to combine all trades. "I took a good deal of example," continued Doherty, "from Mr. O'Connell's proceedings in Ireland; I thought as he had been successful in Ireland we might be successful in England." "Were you as successful as Mr. O'Connell?" he was asked, to which he replied, "Certainly not." "You had not the same material?" suggested O'Connell. "No,

and not the same skill and ability to work them," answered Doherty gracefully.

Of Irish trade unionists' ordeals in the early thirties there is an expressive account in George Kerr's *Exposition of Legislative Tyranny and Defence of the Trade Union*, published in Belfast in 1834. He referred at the outset to the wholesale denunciation of the unions by the wealthy classes and the generality of the press. "We have," he said, "the woeful examples before us of the harsh and inhuman treatment of the trades unionists that are everywhere taking place." He happened to be amongst the persecuted himself, and at the desire of his friends he recounted the facts as they had occurred.

In Derry the previous January he arranged a meeting with some of the cabinet-makers in order to learn the state of their trade, and to acquaint them in turn with the position of the cabinet-makers of Belfast, to which body he belonged. As there had been a great falling-off and frequent reductions of the cabinet-makers' wages—30, 40, and in some cases 60 per cent.—"we determined to join the Trades' Union or Friendly Society of Cabinet-makers, which had for its object the unity of all cabinet-makers in the three kingdoms, that they might the more effectually be enabled to support their sick and bury their dead; and that they might be enabled to support their idle brothers who could not get employment, and also to support the travelling operative, who wandered from town to town in

quest of employment, and in short to endeavour by every means in our power to check the evils of society by recommending and providing to our members the means of moral and intellectual improvement."

He left Derry with two other friends, and on returning to Belfast there were congratulations upon the happy prospect "of such a laudable and honourable union." But the suspicion of the ruling and employing orders had been aroused. The Mayor of Derry, in the words of Kerr, raised the arm of persecution against the workers. He had two of the Derry cabinet-makers arrested, and after threats and menaces to induce them to give evidence to the effect that Kerr and the two comrades who had visited Derry administered unlawful oaths to them and others, he consigned them to gaol, "and swore by his immortal God" that he would transport them if they did not swear to the foregoing effect. They were, however, admitted to bail, to appear at the assizes in March. Warrants were also issued for the arrest of Kerr and the two others who went to Derry. One colleague was arrested in Belfast, and sent on to the Mayor of Derry, who interrogated and threatened him as he had done the others. He was then sent to gaol, brought forward to trial at the assizes, and on the non-appearance of the prosecutor admitted to bail, himself in £100, and two sureties of £10 each, to appear when called upon. A great many sawyers, who had been apprehended, were brought up for trial at the

same time on a similar charge. The mayor had caused the house in which they had assembled to be surrounded by police, etc., and although they were sitting peacefully altogether, discoursing on affairs connected with their labour, they were also to be tried as conspirators against the law of their country, "and as being an unlawful combination held together by secret ties of the most revolting kind." They also were bailed out, to appear again if called upon. One of the two individuals first arrested (for the purpose of getting him to prosecute Kerr and his friends) was indicted to stand his trial for perjury, because through the threats of the mayor he was so staggered as to be in a great measure incapable of knowing what he said, and thereby happened to contradict his statements. The other person who was bound over to prosecute did not appear; soon after the assizes he was arrested. Kerr himself was arrested in Belfast, taken to the House of Correction, and after two hours "was sent off like some thief or murderer," guarded by four policemen with loaded muskets, two of them leaving when they had escorted him some distance from the town. Arriving in Antrim the same evening he was locked up in the bridewell for the night. He set out from Antrim after breakfast-time, with another couple of police from the Antrim station. He was conveyed in this manner from station to station, walking part of the road, new police taking charge at each station, till Derry was reached.

He was taken straight away to the house of the mayor and questioned by that functionary. Was he chairman of the late Belfast meeting held to petition for the exercise of the clemency of the Crown on behalf of the six Dorchester prisoners (trade unionists whose transportation is a famous illustration of the outlook and tactics of the contemporary master class)? He answered that he was. There were several other queries. Was he a trade unionist? He was happy to say that he was; and then he asked the reason of his being dragged from home in so ignominious a manner. "The attorney-general will answer you," was the brusque reply of the mayor. There were arguments and difficulties about bail; in the mayor's house, and then in his office, whither Kerr was taken. One man was objected to because he was a trade unionist, others because they could not swear they were worth double the amount of the bail, free of all debts, dues, and demands. Kerr happened to say at one stage that he did not care by what tribunal he was tried, "even although his Britannic Majesty presided over it." The mayor threatened to commit him for contempt of court, professing to regard the expression as an insult to the monarch. More and more difficulties were thrown in the way of bail; Kerr at last was sent to the gaol, ordered to give up everything in his possession, and, after being stripped naked, was put in prison garb. Secured in a ward over which was painted "Committed to assizes," the prison barber came in, performed a "severe

scrape," shaved off one-half of Kerr's whiskers and "pruned" the other half. The governor appeared, asked Kerr if he could break stones, but, in answer to his request to be given tradesmen's work, allowed him into the carpenter's shop. He describes the prison conditions as very severe; he eventually escaped from them on bail. He mentions in the pamphlet that his trial was due on the 25th of July. The later pages of his *Exposition* are very general in their terms, but they show withal a good deal of feeling. George Kerr, it is evident, was painfully conscious of the hostility and injustice that followed the trade unionist, north as well as south, in those perilous days for "combinators." But his heart was as strong as his convictions. Happily in Derry and Belfast there were such faithful souls who thought and wrought through the worst in the cause of the under-men.

How low their position had come to be in the north we learn from evidence of employé and employer before the Select Committee on Handloom Weavers which reported in 1835. John Boyd, Belfast weaver, said there were three classes of weavers in the town and neighbourhood: the least numerous class received in wages 6s. to 6s. 6d. a week, and worked from 14 to 16 or 18 hours a day, with an hour and a half for meals. The second class, more numerous, earned 5s. to 5s. 6d. a week, working the same hours. The third class, less able or less dexterous, and working on coarser material, earned 3s. 6d. to 4s. 6d.

a week. In reply to questions as to the mode of living he took the case of a man, wife, and two children, and gave the following details of weekly supplies and expenses:

	s	d
10 stones of coal at 1½d. a stone ...	1	3
Loom rent	1	0
[This did not include rent of the house: it was only rent on cost for the wear and tear.]		
¾ stone oatmeal	1	3
1 lb. candles for shop	0	6
1 lb. candles for house	0	3
3 stone potatoes	0	7½
8 quarts sour milk	0	4
8 herrings	0	4
½ oz. tea, ½ lb. sugar	0	5½
Bread	0	4
½ lb. soap	0	2½
	6	6½

The house rent for a two-loom shop with the necessary accommodation was from £5 to £5 10s. per annum. As to the third class of weavers some had potato ground in the country, and so added to their food supplies. The whole body by their earnings failed to secure enough to eat. All were extremely ill-clad. For some time there had been a considerable falling-off in the number of looms in the industry, owing to the inability of the weavers to repair or renew them. The evidence

of John Boyd was confirmed by Alexander Moncrieffe, a Belfast manufacturer, who added that Scots capitalists were coming in, as they found labour in Belfast cheaper than in Scotland. This was owing, he said, to the lack of trade unionism among the weavers, in consequence of the differences that kept Catholic and Orange workers from combining. As may be expected, in stating the facts as they appeared to him—which he did in some detail—he did not suggest any sympathy with trade unionism in itself. John Chadwick of Drogheda, a dealer in linen, told of the wretched condition of the hand-loom weavers in his neighbourhood. The earnings were not sufficient for the necessaries of life. In 1812 the price for weaving a piece of 78 yards was 15s.; in 1816 it was 16s. In 1820 five yards were added to the length of the piece, and the price for weaving was reduced to 10s. In 1828 the length was further increased to 88 yards, and the price for weaving reduced to 7s. 6d. In 1834 the length was increased to 93 yards, and the price for weaving reduced to 7s. Patrick McGray, handloom weaver, Drogheda, confirmed the statement of Mr. Chadwick. The earnings of weavers, he said, was not more than 3s. or 3s. 6d. a week. They generally lived on potatoes and salt, and were compelled to send their wives and children out to beg every day in the week. The majority of the Drogheda weavers thought it impossible that they could be worse off unless their lives were taken.

The Commission that began inquiries in 1835

into the State of the Labouring Poor dealt exhaustively with many aspects of life in town and country, taking evidence from Catholic and Protestant ecclesiastics, from farmers and manufacturers, from artizans and rural labourers, and from sundry other folk, including beggars. Assistant commissioners gave considerable attention to the burning question of combination. Cork's own town had a liberal share of it. It had led to havoc in the hat trade, and we are informed that both masters and men were to blame. Cork at one time manufactured its own head-gear, and in 1832, when there was a new move to encourage Irish manufacture it was thought that Cork might do so again. Masters, journeymen, and friends of industry met together. There were still forty-five journeymen hatters in the city. In the course of discussion and inquiry it was shown that the masters had disposed of hats at prices that allowed them large profits, so the journeymen insisted on an increase of wages, and that each master be restricted to two apprentices. They objected also to the employment of women and children. Men and masters could not come to terms, and the project was abandoned.

In Cork there were still from 400 to 500 coopers, not continuously employed, however. It was stated that their union would not allow any country coopers to work in the city. One employer brought in twelve in spite of them. His house was attacked, but the police force, brought into the city only a few weeks before, in conse-

quence of labour troubles, came to the rescue. These details, it should be noted, were from outside sources: the coopers, and also the masons and carpenters, had declined to see the commissioners.

The shoemakers of Cork, we are told, had a club or union, none but members of which were allowed to work in the city. Members must have served an apprenticeship in Cork, or if not in Cork, were obliged to pay an entrance fee of £1. The wages were from 12s. to 16s. a week, but employment was not constant. The shoemakers' club met monthly in a public-house, where each member was bound to spend 3d.

The tale of the handloom weavers was told by a weaver still in the prime of life (46) who could earn no more than 6d. or 8d. a day. Once on a time he could earn 2s. a day, or on occasion 15s. a week. There were seventy-two looms still at work in the city.

In regard to Bandon, once an important linen mart, but fallen on lean days, the commissioners, or assistant commissioners, criticised the manufacturers for want of enterprise. They had vainly endeavoured to maintain handlooms in competition with mechanical power. They had neglected to utilise the country's resources in the way of water-power. Combination had played its part in local troubles. It was admitted that employers had treated men harshly. Some were paid in goods, for which they were charged 20, 30, and even 40 per cent. over the regular prices. In the

way of profiteering at any rate there was a mean sort of enterprise in Bandon.

In Limerick the once extensive manufacture of cottons and checks was nearly extinct, and the few weavers who remained were in a state of extreme indigence. In Waterford, on the other hand, the tale of Labour was rather lively, at any rate from the point of view of organization. Masters made grave complaints over combination on the part of bakers, carpenters, sawyers, and shoemakers. Mr. Waters, master baker, declared that the journeymen came together every week to make laws and hold inquiries. Their "stock purse" was so large that they could easily combine against employers and defeat them. In fact they were "quite independent of their masters." Mr. Waters said nothing to throw light on journeymen's wages and masters' profits.

In the north, as in the south, the industrial review was pessimistic. In Derry the lot of the labourers was summed up as wretched. Their wages were given as 7s. 6d. a week, while the weavers received only 6s., so there was a lower level of wretchedness. Coopers earned 25s. a week, coachmakers 21s., carpenters and sawyers 18s. Masters complained that those who earned the highest wages were addicted to drink. They apparently considered 25s. or 21s. a week high wages. They were pleased to say that the former habit of idling on Mondays had been generally given up—by the wage-earners, not necessarily by themselves.

The assistant commissioners noted how contradictory were the tales they heard from the employers generally on the subject of combination. They had talks on that perennial theme with masters and with journeymen in the capital as well as in the country, and the question remained much as it had been before. In these and kindred talks and pronouncements, contradictory though they often were, there were certain ever-recurring Features. The Pathetic Note, for example. Workers went on strike; they and their families suffered privation; therefore, said the wistful bosses and critics, going on strike is wicked, and the thought of what women and children endure thereby, heartrending. Again, there was the Industrial Protection note. The raising of wages (through the pressure of combination) was a menace to the industry concerned; it lowered profits and left the master less heart for his beneficent work of providing employment. Continue the pressure and his heart might give way altogether. Industry and business were affairs at once august and delicate, the concern of master-minds born for authority and riches. The part of the producer at the base was to work as he was ordered and to be grateful for the little that kept him alive. Such was unalterable economic Law, as conceived by the masters and blessed by the moralists.

Chapter VII.

O'CONNELL AND TRAGI-COMEDY.

We are indebted indirectly to Daniel O'Connell for the next great flood of light on the struggles and conditions of trade unionists in Ireland. We are enabled in large measure to visualize their story as it unfolded itself in the thirties: principally in Dublin, but considerably also in the country. It is still more intense than the tale of the twenties.

Whatever may have been the abilities and the services of O'Connell, that singularly mixed individuality had little insight into the Gaelic genius and no sympathy at all with industrial democracy. Taking the story of Babel quite literally and innocently he regarded variety of language as a curse upon humanity, and of all that the decline of Irish meant he had not the least understanding. As to the other issue he considered property something sacred, but he had not even a dim discernment of anything sacred in the wealth-producers. Devoted to political and religious liberty, according to his lights, he had no conception of industrial freedom; or rather what he meant by industrial freedom was the freedom of the employers to take the wealth produced for them and prevent the producers from asserting their individuality and securing their rights, individually and collectively. He stood in

sober fact for industrial despotism and spoliation. Hence we find him in Dublin in 1837, vigorously and vehemently on the side of the masters, chairman of their anti-combination society, unsparing in his denunciation of the claims and tactics of the workers, who hampered, he declared, the legitimate exercise of industry. In their turn the workers, who had been his ardent supporters, denounced him bitterly, hooted him in the streets, and broke up his meetings. It was a furious quarrel, and is useful even to this day to capitalist historians and critics, who take the charges of O'Connell as true. Even Sidney and Beatrice Webb, in their *History of Trade Unionism*, sum up the rules and regulations of the Dublin trade unionists as "abominably selfish," a summary which is flagrantly unjust. O'Connell carried the war to the British Parliament, in February, 1838, and the result was yet another Select Committee of Inquiry, into the Constitution, Proceedings and Extent of that terrible thing, Combination by Workers. The famous committee of 1838 issued no report, and in a sense came to nothing. But the voluminous evidence—after scores of pages relating in the main to Glasgow—bring us straight and sheer into grim as well as curious realms of Irish industrial realities.

Sawyers were the first to receive attention. James Fagan, Dublin timber merchant, was their accuser and judge. He told of clash and struggle with them, of violent outbreaks on their part, and of the fatal wounding, some years earlier, of a

man named Hanlon who had broken their rules and defied them. The attack on Hanlon in broad daylight in Dublin was a ferocious one, according to the story, but the circumstances were by no means clear. Hanlon, when he went abroad, always carried a hatchet, Mr. Fagan admitted in the course of his examination—a rather challenging weapon of defence in troubled days. He thought the unfortunate man had not used it, and had no opportunity of using it, on the tragic occasion. Sawyers examined later repudiated the notion that violence was part of the policy of their union. They spoke pointedly of Mr. Fagan's efforts to reduce his workers' wages, so he was not exactly an unbiassed witness. He admitted himself that he paid labourers only 10d. a day in Meath and 9d. a day in King's County for oak-felling. When Hindley, a member of the committee who did not ignore the position of the workers, pressed him a little strongly on the scantiness of the wages, he pleaded that they were the district rates, and that he could not offend the farmers of the locality by giving more. He had heard of the "Welters," supposed to be labourers whose dire business in Dublin life, it used to be alleged, was to sally forth and beat "colts" to order; but he threw no light on the mysterious body, if such existed. Its local habitation may have been in the same region as the Board of Green Cloth.

After this there were many stories and confidences as to the customs and tactics of the

printers in Dublin, in Belfast, and throughout the country. The testimony was not exactly sensational, but it was interesting and often entertaining. The main impression conveyed was that the printers were the most powerful, peaceful, and successful trade unionists of their generation. They organized as calmly and as deftly as they set their type; they did nothing thrilling or impassioned, but, astute and subtle artists, they generally had their way. Philip Dixon Hardy, master printer and publisher, questioned by O'Connell, told how their proceedings shattered his nerves and made him tired of his business existence. He felt he was not master in his own office. They limited apprentices, they declined to work with men who were not members of the "body," and they insisted on a minimum wage of 30s. a week. They charged as much for a page containing woodcuts as if they had "set" the page entirely. He had to pay too much for a bad workman, but admitted that the body did not encourage bad workmen against good ones. Mr. Hardy's story of his experiences with the *Dublin Penny Journal* and other publications had much tedious repetition. He confessed that his real grievance was over the question of "principle": he felt he ought to be master in his own office, and compositors' rules marred the mastery. Mr. Hardy had a proud consciousness that dignity should hedge a publisher, and banded printers made moral "pie" of dignity.

Mr. Michael Staunton, proprietor of two Dublin newspapers, the *Morning Register* and *Weekly Register*, was more genial, though technical and tedious at times. He said that at first the combination of printers was only in regard to wages: the limitation of apprentices did not come till 1836. There were 914 printers in all Ireland, 429 in Dublin and not more than half of them employed. He believed in high wages, but thought printers and others would be as well or better off without combination at all. The 177 jewellers in Dublin earned higher wages than most mechanics, but he had never heard yet of combination amongst jewellers. If employers and journeymen were in the habit of a freer interchange of thought much less trouble would occur. From his own experience he concluded that the printers' combination was the most successful of all. With newspaper proprietors especially they simply had their will and their way.

James Henderson, *Newry Commercial Telegraph*, told how much he had been annoyed by combination on the part of printers, directed by the governing body in Dublin. Wages 25s. a week, a working day of ten hours, limitation to four apprentices; such were their stern demands, which he had resisted. Francis Dalzell Finlay of Belfast, proprietor of the *Northern Whig* and *Reformer*, had a still more grievous story. He was rudely disturbed in 1834 on receiving from the Society of Printers in Belfast their rules and regulations. Wages were a guinea a week, but

that was not the issue; the trouble was office regulations—limitation of apprentices—to which he would not agree. The journeymen gave "notice." He tried for others in Scotland and Dublin, and when the "colts" from the capital arrived a "mob" of 2000 persons collected in Belfast to express their feelings. He had to bring police to stand at both ends of the street to protect the Dubliners; he had even to take some of them to his own dwelling. Certain of the newcomers had to be provided with pistols, and he himself was obliged to carry a sword-cane. But —unkind cut of fate—after a time the Dublin "colts" joined the union, and demanded that he should reduce his apprentices. This from "colts" he had honoured and armed! He gave way. Emboldened they demanded 25s. a week. Again he surrendered. In a later day came trouble and "notice" over his employment of a reporter as a part-time compositor. This time he held out. He brought in country children, some of them ten years of age, set them up secretly in an office at the rear of his regular premises, taught them by day, took them out for exercise at night. He was left with them, the apprentices, and some imperfect boys who had been a short time at the business. Soon the apprentices were stolen from him. Two or three "gentlemen" from big houses came to assist him, without wages; he worked himself; his wife gave literary assistance; and with all this and the children's aid he was enabled to go on. Other newspaper proprietors, in Belfast and

Newry, tried tactics like his own. They were men of different politics, but they united against the trade unionists.

The Belfast Typographical Society, he knew, was linked with the Irish Typographical Union—the organization for all Ireland. First there were benefit societies and friendly societies, which gradually undertook trade union activities. Thus a series of rules (which he handed in) from the book of the Irish Typographical Union, were prefaced by the declaration that they were framed at a meeting of delegates from the four provinces held in Dublin on the 15th of September, 1836, pursuant to a notice issued by the committee of the Dublin Typographical Provident Society. After this piece of printers' trade unionist history he informed O'Connell and his colleagues that "combination is prevailing very much in Belfast in other trades." There was actually a law among canvas and rope makers that none should be trained as apprentices save the sons of workmen.

O'Connell then had to hear the story from the workers' standpoint. Thomas Daly, journeyman printer on the *Evening Mail*, and secretary of the Dublin printers' body, told of their objects: the formation of a permanent fund to afford relief to those out of employment, the settlement of the price of labour between employers and employed, and other matters affecting the welfare of the printing community. Those unemployed were allowed 7s. 6d. a week for the first six weeks, and 5s. for each of the next seven weeks—£4 in all.

They also assisted unemployed printers to emigrate (if unemployed for any cause except ill conduct): £4 if a man wished to go to England, £8 if he desired to go to America. They had so assisted 120 emigrants in the four years 1834–7. The secretary (paid 20 guineas a year), four compositors, and three "pressmen" formed the committee. They, along with delegates from their different Dublin offices, met on Saturday evenings to transact business, deal with the money received and the money to the unemployed. Their meeting-place was a public-house, to which each paid sixpence. The printers were trying to extend their organization all over Ireland (members of the local Dublin society were as a matter of course members of the Irish Typographical Society, the All-Ireland Union: one merged in the other). They had nothing to do with printers in either England or Scotland, nor were they connected with other Irish trades. The scale of Dublin printers' wages was agreed upon in 1829. The rule of the I.T.U. as to apprentices—one where two journeymen were employed, two where four, and three where six journeymen worked, and no higher number than four in other cases—had been agreed to by several master printers. The printing community gave no countenance to acts of violence.

We may pass from the printers with a few points of historical interest from the evidence of Matthew Ryan, the secretary of the Irish Typographical Union, the All-Ireland Alliance. He

had been connected with the printing trade in Dublin since 1818. The members of the local society then in existence subscribed 5s. 5d. each per annum; a sum too small to afford any real assistance to members in distress. They grew tired of subscribing and abandoned the society in 1825. In the latter part of that year they found it necessary to subscribe weekly a certain sum for the unemployed, but it was not enough, and they were obliged to make a public appeal. This hurt them so much that in order to avoid such humiliation in future they formed a regular society which had gone on till that day. He mentioned that the I.T.U. had sent £100 to Belfast printers during the quarrel with Finlay, and £90 to Newry comrades during the contention with Henderson.

So much for the placid but effective printers. With the building workers came more exciting records. Edward Murray, Dublin architect and master builder, told a lurid tale. His premises had been burned some months before. He spoke of the beating of "colts" in his employ, of imported Scots workers waylaid. He had carried pistols and a dirk for two years. Dublin, he declared, was overbuilt. "No man can live on the business in Dublin. I blame the employers for it more than the workmen; one is cutting against another, so that no man is properly paid." O'Connell remained silent.

Edward Carolan (or Carolin), another master builder, went over the old story told by his father to the committee of 1824, spoke of violent attacks

on Dublin "colts" in the years since then, and of the intimidation of Scotsmen his firm had brought over during a crisis. At a later stage the secretary of the working carpenters set this same intimidation in a humorous light. He said that of course his society did not want the Scots to work for Carolan, so they talked things over with them, coaxed them, treated them to the very best that Dublin could provide, including beefsteaks. The Scots endured £80 worth of this intimidation—and then went to work for Carolan!

William Mackie, a third master builder from Dublin, alleged that he got into trouble with the workmen in 1832 because he wanted to retain as his own apprentices two boys whose father, to whom they had been apprenticed, had died of cholera. His house had been attacked, and he had been obliged to carry arms. Later in the proceedings there was a declaration in due legal form from the boys in question that his story in regard to them was untrue.

Novel and spirited testimony was borne by another employer, Benjamin Eaton, architect and master builder, engaged in extensive business in Dublin. He had had forty years' experience of the profession, ever since he had been bound apprentice to his father in 1798. He had heard the evidence of Mackie and Carolan with very great regret. He had never employed any workmen but the regular "body" men, and he had never had any difference with them, except on one occasion, when the carpenters required 6d. a

day extra, being beyond the Circular Road. He was not pleased with the demand, but he gave way. He had always treated the workmen with respect, and they in turn had treated him with respect and gratitude. Their regulations had never interfered with the way he wished to conduct his business. He employed them because he considered them the best workmen and the most respectable. He deeply regretted the violent outbreaks described by Mackie and Carolan and those of which he had personally known or heard in Dublin. But his tribute to the workers as he had found them in his own long experience was emphatic. O'Connell made no comment.

There was varied testimony, with abundant revelation, by representative workers. William Darcy, plasterer, began his story with the statement that the Plasterers' Society was established 175 or 176 years before: he apparently meant the guild. The employers, he averred, took every advantage of the workingmen. They did not pay them regularly; very often at a late hour on Saturday night they gave them portions of the sums due, and for the rest put them off till "next week." Sometimes the men were paid in copper money of a very inferior description. This system of bad copper payments had been practised for eight or nine years. On the much-canvassed question of capacity and wages, he noted that any plasterer not so good as the generality had liberty to work for such wages as were agreed upon. A difference, determined by the society and the

employer, was made in regard to inability, advancing age, or infirmity.

Robert Regin, house painter, Dublin, in the course of his story referred to charges against the workers made by a master painter and decorator, Peter Connary [examined later] during the O'Connell campaign the previous year in Dublin, and declared that no man employed by Connary got his wages in full on a Saturday night.

Besides the regular Irish Society of Carpenters Dublin had members of the General Society of Carpenters of Great Britain and Ireland—unpopular with the national trade unionists for not living up to the principle of solidarity—and one of these, Joseph O'Neil, gave evidence. A special point of it was that certain employers, who had government and public work contracts, gave day work to men at low wages, generally 16s. or 18s. a week, and charged £1 10s. 0d. for each of them in their bills. Like the carpenters, the Dublin bricklayers gave some members to a British body, the Friendly Society of Operative Bricklayers, but these were regarded as "colts" by the Irish society.

Stage by stage employers' stories sounded strong till the workers' case was presented. Special interest was apparently attached to the appearance of Peter Connary, the master painter and decorator who had been so vehemently on the side of O'Connell in the Dublin campaign, but who had been roundly accused of putting off his workmen with partial payments. Mr. Connary

had been a working painter himself for some years, for periods a member of the regular society, but at stages a "colt," as he frankly confessed before the select committee. In 1820, he averred, the regular men, of whom he was then one, discussed violent measures, and agreed to attack "colts." They borrowed £20 from the carpenters, and there was a promise of £10 from the paper-stainers. Every man at work in their own trade had to pay 3s. 3d. a week to a special fund (the suggestion, though not clear, was that the money was for use in connection with the violent tactics). Acts of violence took place; individuals were beaten, shops were wrecked, property was destroyed. About that time a shipbuilder was killed. Some years later there was further trouble, owing to the men insisting on being paid at the same rate, 13d. in the shilling, in the new currency as in the old. When the clash was at its worst—in the earlier struggle of 1820—there was a proposal that two men who refused to turn out should be beaten—lots were to be drawn and those selected supported by hired individuals. Connary so strongly objected, he said, that the project was dropped; but a meeting was held the same night in another house without his knowledge—how he came to know he did not state—and next morning the men were beaten, and the property of their master, Mr. Austin, destroyed. Friends dissuaded him from carrying out his intention of bringing the responsible party before the magistrates. Questioned closely as to this

alleged episode of eighteen years before, he admitted that the majority of the members were opposed to the violent proposals. He gave, but on hearsay (!) a story to the effect that the painters had a leader of violence, called the General, who was paid 30s. a week. He himself had been president of the painters' body, and was responsible at one stage, he said, for a secession of non-violent members. He confided to the committee that he carried arms. A point of more historical interest was that many Scottish painters were at work in the North of Ireland, and that they were on the increase in the country. They were preferred because they worked cheaper: 18s. a week.

He was questioned on the charge of only partially paying his workmen. "It is not true," he said; "it is very seldom I pay them short £1, and it would be a very little time; I give them the balance the next week, or the week after." He added the interesting fact: "Strangers or those I have not confidence in, I pay them in full." Only to such as had been a long time in his employ, "that I knew could afford it, I would leave any unpaid." He added that he had commenced as an employer without any capital, and never could get the better of the rules and regulations. But it seems he had tried hard. Having told of later quarrels and strikes against him, over his preference for "colts" in the quest of profits, he admitted that there had been no "slating" since 1826, nor for the most part since 1821. His

revelations, such as they were, belonged almost to another generation, and he was scarcely an untainted authority.

James Kavanagh, the secretary of the working carpenters, gave impressive evidence. Their principal objects, he said, were to apprentice orphans, to assist widows, to bury deceased and aid distressed members, and to support by regular combination fair rates of wages. They had built an asylum for their aged and infirm, and intended to establish a practical school for their youth. Never did the carpenters encourage intimidation, directly or indirectly. As to the much-discussed question of apprentices—limited so long in Britain by legislation—it would be a hardship on the trade and themselves to rear up a vast number of them. The men had to teach them, the masters never did. A surplus of them, of strangers, would deprive the men's own children of being brought up to the trade. On the question of the uniform rate for working carpenters, there was certainly uniformity unless where a cause against it could be shown. In cases of physical disability or want of talent the journeyman was allowed to work for just what he was worth. Mr. Kavanagh made a detailed statement as to negotiations some months previously with the masters over rules and regulations (never strictly enforced by the society). The pet scheme of the masters, the classification of wages, was the main matter on which agreement could not be reached. The men had very fairly insisted that generally speaking

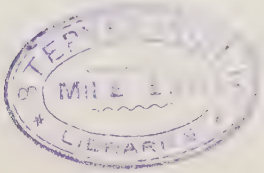
—and exceptions were provided for—a carpenter who had been duly trained and tested was worth the regulation rate; and they entered into technical and general reasons to show that the "classification" theory was specious and unworkable. Garrett Murray, foreman carpenter, who also gave evidence, showed that extravagant profits had been a means of driving trade from Dublin.

Robert Morton, shipbuilder from 1812, repeated the tale of the unreason of ship carpenters. His business in Dublin had become very small, while in Waterford, Cork, Belfast, and Drogheda, shipbuilding had made progress in the two previous years. He was emphatic on the evils of combination by shipworkers. The grievances were that they limited the number of apprentices, demanded 27s. a week for every man, whether he earned it or not (in Mr. Morton's estimation), and took three-quarters of an hour for breakfast instead of half-an-hour as of old.

Quaint and curious information was imparted by John Farley, boat-owner on the Royal Canal, and also dealer in corn, and by John Costello of Luisborough, Co. Longford, who had similar sources of revenue. When either took a captain —who arranged his own little crew—he was bound to him, it might be, for life, or at any rate the captain was bound to the boat while it lasted. No one else would take his place. The boat-owner indeed might dismiss him, but then he had perforce to tie up the boat. Mr. Costello told how he once braved things out and took a new captain

(presumably a "colt"). The boat was burned soon after. At another stage, when a captain was unwell, he refused to instal the captain's son, a small boy, in his place. The boat was sunk. At times, at the ends of voyages, there were deficiencies in the cargoes, which the captains as a rule would not pay for, though bound to do so. These stories of the autocracy and royal life of canal-going captains were startlingly impressive, until Mr. Costello mentioned that a captain drew 32s. a week, out of which he had to pay his "crew" of two 10s. each, leaving a round 12s. for himself. His sway had its drawbacks.

When we consider those stories as a whole it is no great matter for wonder that the committee did not present a report and that the Westminster Parliament did nothing. O'Connell did not make an impressive figure at the sittings, after all the passion of the campaign in Dublin, and his sweeping charges when moving for the Select Committee. Sober unfolding of the ways of masters and the real lives of workers took the truculence out of him. Unwittingly he did Irish Labour a service — in leaving it expressive materials for history.



Chapter VIII.

WEAVERS AND "LOCK-UPS."

"They seem to be as happy in reality as they are miserable in appearance." The reference is to dwellers on the mountains of Donegal, Irish speakers, of course, and descendants of the dispossessed Gaels who found refuge in the hills in the days of confiscation and plantation. The sentence occurs in the elaborate report on the Irish hand-loom weavers made by C. G. Otway, assistant commissioner, for the General Commission on the Hand-loom Weavers of Britain and Ireland, 1838. Those poor workers of Donegal, like the Gaels in general, had a lively mental life of their own, and their circumstances were not the wretched thing they seemed. It is well to realise this fact at all stages of the history of Irish toilers in the first half of the nineteenth century. Without it the story of the hand-loom weavers in the Gaeltacht would seem an exceptionally pitiful chronicle. The hand-loom weavers' trade was the least profitable of all the trades in Ireland, at any rate from the time when the industry came to be undermined by British competitive capitalism, with its mechanical inventions and huge resources generally. The lot of the hand-loom weaver was sometimes considered to be even worse than that of the agricultural labourer. But his devotion to

the traditional loom was as desperate and as faithful as that of his brother in misfortune to the land. And often apparently he was happy. In the Gaeltacht he wove dreams as well as material.

But there were thousands of hand-loom weavers outside the still wide-extending Gaeltacht as well as within it, and they, too, got much out of an unpromising life, and clung to the traditional looms and the traditional ways with an almost religious zeal. The struggle of the hand-loom weavers, north and south, against the invasion of capitalism, is one of the sturdiest features of Irish industrial history. When Otway, who little understood the pride and pathos of it, made his study in 1838 (his report was published in 1840), the position was complicated and the results were mixed, especially in the linen trade (there were hand-loom weavers in the silk, linen, cotton, and woollen industries). The old Ulster order under which weavers grew their flax on their own little holdings, went through all the processes of manufacture in their homes, and sold the webs in the lively linen markets in due course, still obtained in some places. Again, there were weavers, with plots of land, who worked for manufacturers. There were other weavers, who had no plots, who also worked in their own homes for manufacturers. A fourth class consisted of those who worked in weaving shops or factories. The factories for a long time were unpopular. Thus Otway found that the hand-loom weavers of Belfast had still a great dislike to such factories;

lock-ups they called them. The men said that working in those "lock-ups" put them more in the power of the employers. The wages varied greatly: from 5s. to 14s. 6d. a week.

In Rathfriland the linen hand-loom weavers still carried on a considerable share of manufacture on their own account. The greater number occupied small farms, varying from an acre to four acres each. Certain of the weavers occasionally worked for hire as agricultural labourers. On the other hand, in Banbridge, the principal seat of the linen manufacture (as Belfast was the great emporium) the big capitalists had come in, and not one weaver in a hundred worked on his own account. Yet in Lurgan, again, the linen trade was carried on to a great extent by weavers who were their own masters. They, too, had a deep dislike to seeking work from employers. As a rule they held farms: each from one acre to ten. In Tanderagee the employers were on the increase.

In the Co. Donegal, Tir Conaill of the Gael, the linen weaving was chiefly in the hands of those who wove for the farmers' use or for sale in the country fairs and markets. The weavers on the whole were fully employed from the 1st of May to the end of December, excepting a month in harvest, and had only half work from the beginning of January to the end of April. At full work they could earn no more than 8d. to 10d. a day, clear of all expenses. The weavers who made up cloth on their own account for sale at the fairs and weekly common markets realised from 5s. to

7s. 6d. a week, but the results were uncertain, and but few were able to stand the changes of the markets or had sufficient capital to provide the raw material. There was not one-third of the number that so worked a decade earlier; the majority had gone to Scotland or America. The weavers who worked for the farmers were worse paid than the same class of weavers in any other part of Ireland, owing to the poverty of the farmers themselves. The Gaels on the mountains —who were increasing in numbers—were the poorest of all. Yet as noted above they had their own joy in life.

Richard M. Muggeridge, another assistant commissioner, made a long report to the same Commission on the Linen and Cotton Manufacture in Ireland, telling much the same story as Otway in regard to the invasion of the capitalists. He gave an interesting description of the linen-markets (mostly covered) in Ulster. The buyers stood on stools or benches, a couple of feet high, behind long tables, before which the weavers, bearing their webs, came to make their offers, and soon or late—after going from buyer to buyer, and using their powers of argument and persuasion—to clinch the bargains, and have the cover of the webs marked with the price and initialled by the buyer. The market had racy elements. Every regular buyer had some centre (frequently a public-house) to which all weavers from whom he had purchased webs in the course of the market duly carried them and received payment in ready money

the same afternoon. The sum of 2d. was deducted from the price for each web to pay the purchaser's rent of the paying house. This was called "the house twopence." A further 2d. on each web was deducted for the functionary known as the seal-master. In this way thousands of pounds per annum were lost to the hardworking weavers.

Samuel McKenny was deputed to give evidence on behalf of 900 linen hand-loom weavers in Belfast, 700 of whom had been obliged to enter the factories, the "lock-ups" they so much disliked. As producers of wealth, said Samuel, they ought to have a fair share of it. They urged repeal of the corn laws, and were friendly to the scheme of a trade board. Samuel spoke strongly of the denial of education to the workers; he was an earnest believer in moral and intellectual cultivation. All knowledge should be free, there should be no taxes on literature, no duty on newspapers. He desired the abolition of all ebullitions of party feeling, seeing the unhappy outcomes of party spirit on both sides. The mental as well as the social note was strong in his evidence. There was the making of a sound Labour leader in Samuel McKenny.

Muggeridge on his own account was struck by the irony of so much poverty (for the wealth-producers) in a country "with a rich soil, whose powers of production have not been called into fruition, or even half-activity." But Muggeridge, ironically enough, proceeded to harp, like so many of his contemporaries, on the poor-law

panacea! His report, by the way, contains one singular illustration of the Irish struggle for existence, taken from the copious pawn-office literature of the early nineteenth century. It tells of folk who used to pawn their bedclothes in the morning, buy potatoes with the proceeds, retail them to others, and thus realise sufficient funds to support themselves for the day and redeem the bedclothes at night!

We must return for a spell to Otway and his studies in different directions. Taking the cotton world he found 430 hand-loom weavers at work in Bangor, and the neighbourhood. Only thirty of these held land. Girls at an early age were put to the flowering of muslin. From 500 to 600 looms were employed in the vicinity of Grey Abbey. More than half of the weavers were either land-holders on a small scale or cottiers who were obliged to pay their rent in agricultural labour. But they escaped the "lock-ups."

Going south, Otway found that in Limerick an effort had been made to revive the cotton industry (extinct for fifteen years) by a Scot named Buchanan, who had been attracted by cheap labour. After three years his extensive shawl and embroidery manufactory had just begun to pay its way. In 1831 large sums had been collected for the unemployed and distressed hand-loom weavers of Limerick. The money was mainly expended in enabling them to emigrate! When Buchanan appeared he found only old and infirm weavers to the fore. He set himself to train the young, and

in his own words to Otway, "some of the best weavers I have are boys who were taken almost naked out of the streets."

In Clonmel the assistant commissioner visited Malcolmson's factory, where all the looms were worked by girls, who earned from 3s. to 3s. 6d. a week. In Bandon the cotton trade was almost extinct. He had little to say of the hand-loom weavers in the woollen trade, which was only just beginning to revive.

On the other hand he gave prolonged attention to the hand-loom weavers in the Dublin silk industry—there were 400 of them in May, 1838. Their earnings in the three previous years had been on an average from 12s. to 15s. a week, but there was variety *go leor* in the little incomes, they being sometimes as low as 8s., and even 4s., a week. The struggling weavers wanted a trade board, to fix a minimum wage, a certain legal limitation of machinery, facilities for borrowing money, etc. Everthing they wanted was either undesirable or impracticable, according to Otway. He listened to long stories from employers on the evils of combination, and gave his own convictions on the same theme with a preacher's zeal. He seemed to be obsessed with the notion that combination to raise wages was against all industrial and moral law, and that the true worker must accept his humble lot as part of the order of Nature. The doctrine that Labour is entitled to the wealth it produces would have simply staggered him.

The lives and traits of the hand-loom weavers, in the Gaeltacht and outside it, the long and losing battle against the "lock-ups" and other phases of capitalism, form a tale with both touching and heroic essence. Around the hand-looms is much Irish social history to be woven. Unhappily, unlike that little colony in Dublin in 1816, the land and loom workers, in their better days, were not led to co-operative effort, nor to new ideas and enterprises for new and changing times. So their doom, for all their good and grit, was but a question of years.

The tenacity of varied workers, their battle with detestable systems and miserable circumstances, the riches they had no chance of developing, are facts of the story as decade succeeds decade. Five years after the appearance of Otway's report on the weavers came that of the Devon Commission on Irish Land, with further pictures of ordeal and social blight, but decisive evidence of the growth and the progress that might easily be. Thus Maurice Collis, who was connected with the work of the vast T.C.D. estates—grabbed from the patrimony of the Gael*—told of the pathetic and persistent efforts of the country people to make a living in most unpromising ways, of the ruinous tax of agents, under-agents, bailiffs, and others, on the struggling tenantry, and of the great capabilities of development in Irish lands. J. D. Balfe dwelt on the "room for making vast im-

* See lists of different Elizabethan grants in the "Calendar of the Patent and Close Rolls in Chancery in Ireland," Vol. II. By James Morrin, Clerk of Enrolments in Chancery.

provements" in Meath. Others—but the story of the neglected gold and the wasted workers need not be pursued. The commissioners themselves in their report admitted "the great desire amongst all classes in Ireland for improvement in agricultural knowledge." Social and mental cultivation would have been after the people's heart. It was the year, by the way, of Sir R. Kane's revelation of *The Industrial Resources of Ireland*. But neither industrially nor intellectually could the masses come into their own. Those who robbed and ruled them and those who pretended to lead them drew their attention in divers ways from the root of the matter. And the sham political economists descanted on poor-law, potatoes, over-population, emigration, the crime of combination —everything but the truth.†

† Father Mathew came to give a measure of support to the theory of emigration as a panacea—ironically enough in 1847, when the great exodus was at hand. But he showed (in his evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Colonization from Ireland, 1847) that he looked to it rather as a temporary expedient. The scenes he had witnessed in the preceding twelve months had appalled him. At the same time he insisted strongly on the need and possibilities of industrial development, and his story of his experiences in connection with flax-growing, etc., is very interesting. This side of his interests, like much more of our social and industrial history, is not generally known.

Chapter IX.

LALOR AND LEAN YEARS.

When William Thompson died, and the Ralahine co-operative colony came to a sudden end, in 1833, there was in Ireland a young man of twenty-four who was destined to leave Labour in general a rare gospel, and who might have become in more propitious circumstances an inspiring teacher and leader of democracy. But James Fintan Lalor, physically deformed and mentally masterful, made no national declaration till fourteen years later, and then arising suddenly, at the eleventh hour, like an accusing spirit and prophet, in the Ireland distracted and aghast through *an Gorta Mór*, the Great Hunger, his driving appeal was to a few minds, not the multitude. The "strong basis of logic and reason that underlay his passion," which impressed John O'Leary, the "concentrated and savage earnestness" which struck Gavan Duffy, the teaching after the heart of John Mitchel, were nothing to the dispossessed, the starving and dying workers. Yet his influence worked powerfully through Mitchel and others, thence, as Standish O'Grady seems right in assuming, from Mitchel through the Irish-American press, to Henry George, Michael Davitt, till (we may add) in a new day it moved the intellect and heart of James Connolly and Pádraic MacPiarais. Even in the gloom and tragedy of 1849, after his

release from prison to die, he gathered round him, as John O'Leary tells us, many ardent spirits, notably the more intelligent of the artizan class, and the fire did not die amongst them in the fifties and sixties, although on a general view there is little sign of Lalor's spirit and teaching in the Irish labour world till the appearance of Davitt, and, far more definitely, with the coming of Connolly. Mr. O'Grady says, in his vivid way, of the doctrine that the land and all therein were the people's, that from some fiery seed dropped in his brain by the genius of the age "sprang forth suddenly an idea full-formed, clear, mature, clad as if in shining armour, and equipped for war. Something very new and strange, something terrible as well as beautiful there emerged." So it well might seem to those who had taken seriously the waste of shallow political economy, of complacent theories of clearance and "consolidation," of emigration and poor-law panaceas, of denunciation of the immorality of combination on the part of the "lower" classes, of hunger as the Will of Providence—everything but humanity and sane development—that characterised those four decades: decades of despotism and platitude on the part of the ruling and the possessing classes. But the idea of the land as the community's was always in the consciousness or the subconsciousness of the masses, if the expression thereof was often frenzied and desperate. It was the clarity, the concentration, the driving force of Lalor that were new, not the basal conception.

The potato crop had failed, but there was abundant food in Ireland. That was the material position, and the vital half of it has been obscured ever since by British and Irish capitalists and their agencies and scribes, down to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and Grimshaw's *Facts and Figures about Ireland*. The landlords took possession of the harvest, "of the whole effective sum and substance of that harvest," in the words of Lalor; the tenants had neither subsistence nor seed—in a year when forty-five millions' worth of food was produced!—while the landlords had their spoils. It was a staggering spectacle: a multitude paying rents and perishing, small holders giving up their farms to qualify as "independent labourers" and paupers; world "charity" called for and useless "works" established by the spoilers and blunderers; a community going to the grave or disaster or the emigrant ship while non-producers added to their stores, and spiritual and political leaders at the nadir of ineptitude and betrayal, succumbed to the sway of fatalism and futility.

This was the policy into which Lalor urged the Irish Confederation in the early summer of 1847 to put its heart and mind and means and might:

"I.—That in order to save their own lives, the occupying tenants of the soil of Ireland ought, next autumn, to refuse all rent and arrears of rent then due, beyond and except the value of the overplus of the harvest produce remaining in their hands after having deducted and reserved a due

and full provision for their own subsistence during the next ensuing twelve months.

"II.—That they ought to refuse and resist being made beggars, landless and houseless, under the English law of ejection.

"III.—That they ought further, *on principle*, to refuse *ALL* rent to the present usurping proprietors, until the people, the true proprietors (or lord paramount, in legal parlance) have in national congress, or convention, decided *what* rents they are to pay, and to *whom* they are to pay them.

"IV.—And that the people, on grounds of *policy* and *economy*, ought to decide (as a general rule, admitting of reservations) that those rents shall be *paid to themselves*, the people, for public purposes, and for behoof and benefit of them, the entire general people."

Such was the *mode* for the re-conquest of Ireland, as he repeated more than a year later in *The Faith of a Felon*. The faith and philosophy behind the mode are expressed in those lofty and luminous passages in *The Rights of Ireland:*

"Not to repeal the Union, then, but the conquest—not to disturb or dismantle the empire, but to abolish it utterly for ever—not to fall back on '82, but act up to '48—not to resume or restore an old constitution, but found a new nation and raise up a free people, and strong as well as free, and secure as well as strong, based on a peasantry rooted like rocks in the soil of the land—this is

my object, as I hope it is yours; and this, you may be assured, is the easier as it is the nobler and more pressing enterprise . . . . .

"The principle I state, and mean to stand upon, is this, that the entire ownership of Ireland, moral and material, up to the sun and down to the centre, is vested of right in the people of Ireland; that they, and none but they, are the land-owners and law-makers of this island; that all laws are null and void not made by them, and all titles to land invalid not conferred or confirmed by them; and that this full right of ownership may and ought to be asserted and enforced by any and all means which God has put in the power of man. In other, if not plainer words, I hold and maintain that the entire soil of a country belongs of right to the entire people of that country, and is the rightful property, not of any one class, but of the nation at large . . . I hold further, and firmly believe, that the enjoyment by the people of this right of first ownership in the soil, is essential to the vigour and vitality of all other rights; to their validity, efficacy, and value; to their secure possession and safe exercise . . . I assert the true and indefeasible right of property—the right of our people to live in it in comfort, security, and independence, and to live in it by their own labour, on their own land, as God and Nature meant them to do."

He declared in *The Faith of a Felon* that "it is the right of man to possess, enjoy, and transfer, the substance and use of whatever *he has himself*

CREATED." This title, he held, is good against the world, and is the sole and only title by which a valid right of absolute private property can possibly vest.

Hosts of the people would have adopted Lalor's mode in '48. The leaders, as a whole, were unwilling or unworthy. After a generation a part of Lalor's gospel, and not a little of his mode, were applied in Irish life by Michael Davitt, and after yet another generation James Connolly and his comrades carried the wider message in a new way to the under-folk of the nation, the only element even partially disposed to listen.

After the Great Hunger and the Great Death, and the failure of Lalor's appeal, came the terrible ebb-tide in modern Irish history. Irish Labour shrank, wasted, wandered. Beyond partial and sectional outbursts it showed no stress of life in the way of organization for decades. It added largely to the "unskilled" workers' world in Britain and America, it crowded from the country into our own drab towns. In the rural places, however, numbers of skilled workers stood their ground, laboured on their own account, and made in their own way as brave a battle against circumstances as did the hand-loom weavers, whom they long outlasted. Thus, the country shoemakers, smiths, tailors, carpenters, coopers, and more: many of them racy institutions in our parishes and villages. The late Mr. James McCann used to point with sorrow to the flour and oatmeal mills all over the country, long idle and deserted. In

other days they ground the wheat and oats that were grown in the vicinity, supplied the people with home-grown flour and meal, and of course afforded much employment locally, before the railways with their low "through" rates for foreign flour (and high local rates to the home mills) began the ruin of the industry. The mill-workers, like the local shoemakers, smiths, and many more, so lively and genial in their neighbourhoods, afford little material for the story of organized Labour. As in the case of the hand-loom weavers there was no thought as a rule of co-operative effort on a broad and saving scale, and little consideration was given by the masses or the leaders to the problems of those workers, problems which concerned the community as much as themselves. In the seventies, for instance, the rural shoemakers (like those in the towns) began to be seriously affected by the competition of British machine-made boots, which dealers stocked largely, because they got them slightly cheaper than those from home firms, and also because of the long credit allowed. Their "style" and apparent cheapness attracted many of the country folk in due course, though as a rule they had little staying-power and would be dear at any price. The country shoemakers went on in the old ways, and steadily came to grief. A little alertness and novelty on their part, and a little thought by the masses on their real industrial interests and duties, would have made all the difference. But co-operation, considera-

tion, and enterprise were lacking all round: not only in regard to the rural industries but to bigger interests.

The decline and fall of those rural workers have been rather overlooked by students and statisticians who have dealt with the national misfortunes and the shrinking of industrial life in the more conspicuous orders. It is pointed out in Charles Booth's study in Coyne's *Ireland Industrial and Agricultural* that in 1841—before the Great Hunger and the Great Death in the Land of Plenty—Ireland had more workers in the textile and dyeing industries than England: 696,000 to 604,000. By 1881 there was a startling change; Ireland had only 130,000 to England's 962,000; and Booth considered that the loss of the home weavers and spinners was largely responsible for the wholesale reduction. Between 1841 and 1881 the numbers employed in agriculture decreased by 858,000 out of 1,844,000, and those supported by agriculture by two-and-a-half out of five millions. Other productive industries (building and manufacture) were worse off in proportion, those engaged in the two being less by 626,000 than in 1841. There was an increase in dealers—through want of useful employment. General labourers increased from 31,000 in 1841 to 144,000 in 1881, a grim index of agricultural and industrial distress. There was also a large increase in domestic servants: poverty makes domestic service cheap is Booth's suggested explanation. As to manufacture, there was only

one occupation which had increased considerably in percentage—that under the heading Dress. Going into detail we find, says Booth, it is the shirt-makers only who have increased in numbers: from 47,300 to 71,000, "so that once more it is only in the last refuge of destitute women that we find an increase." Labourers and farm servants fell in the forty years from 1,326,000 to 329,000, farmers from 471,000 to 442,000. Those engaged in building dropped from 72,000 to 56,000. In manufacture the total fell by over 600,000 (989,000 to 379,000). Such figures tell part of the tale of what Ireland lost by not following the lead of Lalor.

Turning from the story of the shrinking and the suffering of Labour in those lean years to something of vigorous self-assertion on its part, we find in the later fifties and early sixties a vehement agitation of the bakers in Dublin and in many country towns, and they were strongly supported by public opinion against the obduracy and unreason of the masters. Sunday work and prolonged night-work, for youths as well as adults, were the prime grievances. There was a great public meeting on the question in Dublin in May, 1860, and the issue was a living one for the ensuing two years. Sunday work and night-work in the baking trade had been abolished in Galway for a few months; in Longford, Carrick-on-Suir, and Killarney for a considerable time; in Lisburn since 1858; in Belfast since 1842; in Derry since 1839. After the Dublin demonstra-

tion, public meetings were held in Limerick, Cork, Waterford, Clonmel, Tipperary, Wexford, Kilkenny, Drogheda, Dundalk, and Newry: the movement also extended to Cahir, Portlaw, Nenagh, Ennis, Rostrevor, and other places. Within a year or so day-work was the order, and went successfully, in Wexford, Kilkenny, Clonmel, Waterford, Cahir, Portlaw, and Rostrevor, while it was adopted partially in Dundalk, Drogheda, Newry, and other towns. In Limerick, where the grievances of the journeymen were exceptional, the movement was defeated by the strong opposition of the master bakers, the miller bakers being the greatest opponents of all. The example of Limerick led to retrogression in Ennis and Tipperary. In Cork, where the strongest possible demonstration of public feeling had taken place, the masters by exercising their power of turning the men out of employment defeated the movement also. In Dublin the master bakers offered the most determined opposition to the men's demands. These points, from a long account by the Irish Committee, are quoted in the second report (January, 1863) to the Home Secretary by H. S. Tremenheere who investigated bakehouse questions in 1862 (his first report dealt with London). The committee also averred that the Dublin master bakers used their power to employ their apprentices for twelve or fourteen hours at night. It declared Sunday work to be demoralizing and degrading to the working classes. Sunday work in baking (except for the strictly

necessary purpose of setting and superintending the sponge) was prohibited by law, but most of the masters broke the law and made the men do the same. The latter, through fear of losing their employment, were made to violate their religious convictions and better feelings. The committee urged day-work of not more than twelve hours, believing that the hours of labour were limited by natural laws which could not be violated with impunity. Working beyond twelve hours encroached on the domestic and private life of the men, and led to disastrous results in the moral as well as the physical order.

Tremenheere in his official report to the Home Secretary, referring further to the Association for the Abolition of Sunday Work and Night-work in the Baking Trade in Ireland, stated that the chairman, the Lord Mayor of Dublin, had advised him that the committee entirely approved of the proposed inspection of bakehouses, and concurred in Tremenheere's further view that youths under eighteen should not be compelled to work in bakeries before 5 o'clock in the morning and after 9 o'clock at night. The committee urged further that youths under eighteen should not be compelled to work for more than ten hours in any one day: that the provisions of the Factory Acts in this respect should be extended to young persons employed in any branch of the baking trade. Tremenheere did not agree! It could not be truly urged, he thought, that such work as fell to youths between 5 a.m. and 9 p.m. was

likely to be physically injurious to them, or in any degree that would justify the intervention of the Legislature in their behalf. But he graciously drew the line at night-work—after 9 p.m. and before 5 a.m. The British Parliament passed the new Bill for the Regulation of Bakeries in 1863: providing State inspection and preventing the employment of journeymen under eighteen between the hours of 9 p.m. and 5 a.m. It was not much, but it showed how bad the situation had been.

In those years when the bakers in the towns and cities agitated so vigorously the land workers, including the small farmers, bore the old burdens and sometimes faced dire ordeals. There were partial famines, as they are called—hunger-plagues in a land producing plenty of food—in 1860, 1861, and 1862. Small farmers as well as labourers were reduced to deep distress, in cases to absolute want. Evictions continued to make emigrants—as Cobden said earlier, emigration in such circumstances was really transportation—or those who could not emigrate were driven into the pitiful world of "unskilled" labour in the towns. Of the painful parting scenes as well as the plight of those who pressed into the towns, we have moving contemporary pictures as seen by Continental eyes. The emigrants figure largely in Perraud's *Etudes sur l'Irlande Contemporaine*, 1862. The French Catholic ecclesiastic's book received high praise from Gustave de Beaumont, who, in his noted work on Ireland, social, political, and religious, first published in 1839,

had shown the hollowness of the emigration panacea—Ireland's trouble lying in her institutions not in her population. In Kerry, Mayo, Donegal, etc., Perraud met the same sort of miserable "dwellings" and studied the same sort of conditions that M. de Beaumont had found a generation before. In the Liberties of Dublin, in parts of Cork, in the "Irish town" quarter of Limerick, and in the suburbs of Drogheda one obtained, he said, a fair idea of the kinds of places in which were packed together the poor families that the agricultural revolution had torn violently away from the labours of the fields. The dwellings of the Dublin poor were ghastly. Some 8,000, or a third of the total houses of Dublin, were let out in rooms to labourers and the poor generally; some 64,000, out of a population of 250,000, inhabited those houses: for the most part in dark alleys and damp courts. There were five, six, or seven persons where only three could live with ease. In some parts of the country there had been a certain improvement in wages and in food conditions, but it was not considerable. The weekly average of wages in several counties was given in an official account published by order of the British House of Commons in 1861. In Roscommon, where wages were highest, the average for men was 10s., for women 5s., for those under age 4s. 6d.; in Dublin 8s. 6d., 4s. 11d., 3s. 9d. respectively; in Galway 6s. 6d., 3s. 7d., 2s. 5d.; in Waterford, where wages were lowest,

the weekly average for men was 4s. 6d.; for women 2s. 9d.

Perraud was deeply impressed by the parting scenes between emigrants and their friends. There is a great deal about the trials of emigrants, in those years and earlier, in his many-sided book. Early Catholic emigrants, the Irish especially, were treated in the distant British colonies with great severity; for example, in Australia from 1818. They were forbidden to speak Irish under pain of fifty strokes of the whip. The magistrates, mostly Protestant clergymen, also sentenced to the whip and close confinement those who refused, though Catholics, to attend their services and hear their sermons. He gave these points on the authority of Dr. Ullathorne, Vicar-General of New South Wales in the thirties, then Bishop of Birmingham, whom he visited in 1860. The chastening story of Irish emigrants to Canada in the sixties, as told by the Bishop of Toronto, will be remembered by readers of John O'Leary's *Recollections*.

About the same time that Perraud studied Irish conditions they were also noted by a German Protestant, Julius Rodenburg, who was interested in Irish literature, music, antiquities, romance, character, and other things grave as well as gay. In *Die Insel der Heiligen* ("The Island of Saints"), Berlin, 1860, he tells of his pilgrimage through Dublin, Wicklow, Killarney, Limerick, Galway, Connemara, and North-east Ulster, vary-

ing his prose with translations of Thomas Moore and lighter lyrics. He found that the Irish were strangers in their own land, and he noted the irony of dire poverty and emigration while lands of an extent and productive power that would support the whole nation lay fallow. Rodenburg published in 1864 in Leipzig *Die Harfe von Erin*, in which besides a deal of story and legend there are translations of Gaelic songs and of Anglo-Irish pieces.

In 1865, in the new edition of *l'Irlande, Sociale, Politique, et Religieuse*, Gustave de Beaumont reviewed the changes in Irish fortunes and misfortunes since 1839, the date of its first appearance. Clearances, crime, emigration loomed large in the study. He condemned the cruel expedient of the "consolidation" of farms, which still went on relentlessly.

The insight of the Continental inquirers is in healthy contrast to the platitudes of certain Irish-born observers of the period. Thus Dr. John Kells Ingram, author of "Who Fears to Speak of 'Ninety-eight?", then Professor of English Literature in Trinity College, Dublin, unbosomed himself of "Considerations on the State of Ireland" to the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland in November, 1863. He descanted on emigration as if it were a benign law of Nature whose working had brought Ireland from congestion and obscurity into gracious activity, into light and power as a world force. He blessed the "National"

system of "education" which had borne her up to culture from Gaelic parochialism and darkness; thus showing how uninformed or biassed a professor of one literature may remain in regard to the essence and genius of another. A very different *Nation* poet of those decades, whose Irish faith, unlike Ingram's, endured, came from the ranks of Labour. This was the muslin weaver, Francis Davis, "The Belfastman," a Munsterman who went to Belfast. He tells us that his education had to be purchased with his own industry and perseverance, at an employment not very remarkable for its remunerative qualities, also that his poems "were thrown up like hurried accounts during my hours of toil, amid the monotonous din of the workshop." Very earnest, much against party spirit and sectarianism, he wrote a great deal in the fluent, rhetorical Young Ireland style, but, unfortunately, very little about the working world that he knew. Even the "Weaver's Song" is no marked exception to the rule:

> And life is but a gingham chain,
> Why o'er it should we grieve,
> Though stripes and checks of joy and pain
> We now and then must weave?
> 'Twill one day end, and this we know—
> The Great Employer's love
> Can every thread that's dark below
> Make rainbow-bright above.

Oh for the day when every cloth
Shall in the light be tried,
And justice given alike to both
Employer and employed!
Oh for ye then, ye drones of trade,
Who crush the struggling poor,
For every fraud ye'll well be paid
With interest full as sure!

In this period of the preparatory work of Rossa and Stephens, of O'Leary and Kickham, and Thomas Clarke Luby, "the rough-and-ready roving boys," too, were not inactive. Ribbonism, for all John O'Leary's dislike of "the ignorant and intractable Ribbonmen," was a contributory force to Fenianism, which for some years turned several of the sturdier Irish elements from immediate social issues, though sundry trade unionists, in Dublin and elsewhere, were alert and zealous. In the capital, the United Trades Association, which met week by week in the Bakers' Hall, Bridge Street, had linked nearly thirty different crafts and industries towards the middle of the sixties. The council, which gave earnest attention to the work of extending the use and popularity of Irish material and manufacture, made an effort to induce unions in other cities and towns to link themselves similarly, with a view to an All-Ireland trades unity eventually. When Edward Senior, poor-law commissioner, adopted at the Select Committee on Irish Taxation, 1864, the hoary

fiction of Irish industries ruined through combination and strikes, the president and secretary of the United Trades Association exposed the legend and showed the real reason of Irish industrial decline. Tidings of the association were features of the Fenian organ, the *Irish People*, until its suppression in 1865.

After '67 there were sharp developments of Ribbonism again, especially in Westmeath, Longford, and by their borders. They were pronounced until 1871, leading incidentally to much debating and declamation in the British Parliament. In Dublin as well as Belfast there was a quite unusual sort of strike in 1871—on the part of the telegraphists, etc. who were associated with operators in Manchester and other British centres. The trouble started in Manchester, where the authorities penalised telegraphists who had started a trade union. Sympathetic strikes followed at both sides of the Irish Sea, some 200 men and women ceasing work in Dublin. The trouble did not last very long; threats, negotiations, formal apologies, and return to work being the main stages. But a strike in such a sphere gave Society and Property a shock.

For a spell Irish Labour as a force seemed to ebb and subside like the Gaolachas. The leanest of the lean years were at hand. True, the rural artizans still left, for all the tightening of economic fate, were lively institutions. But for Labour on the whole the seventies were a dismal period.

James Connolly was a child in Ulster. Sheer and solemn thinking was done by a Mayo Gael amid the horrors of Millbank and Dartmoor.

"There is a budding morrow in mid night."

Chapter X.

IN DAVITT'S DAYS.

With Davitt and the Land League we reach a crowded and stormy stage, whose main features to many of us are personal memories still, rather than history. To the very young generation that has come after, its nature and effects must be an oft-told tale. It only concerns us slightly in these pages. For Irish Labour its direct results were small. What Davitt, with his high mind and democratic nature, might have helped Irish Labour to achieve, in more propitious circumstances, it is vain to inquire. His fellow-leaders, in comparison with him, were indifferent democrats, and he gave way to them on essentials, beginning with land nationalisation, thus leaving the battle for the real reconquest of Ireland for the people of Ireland, still to be fought; for of course a community that does not control the land cannot be safe or free or in the greater senses creative. Like him, the agricultural labourers and the town workers, leaving their own immediate problems, threw themselves into the general struggle, helping to make it the greatest example of combination and direct action in Irish history. It was finely fraternal on their part, and if what might have been a great national and democratic revolution became mainly a farmers' movement and then

a partial political campaign, not on them is the blame. Davitt's early gospel put land nationalisation in the forefront, and his early advising to Parnell, as Francis Sheehy-Skeffington recorded in his study and appreciation, included the support of the labourers, the completion of a powerful organization of all elements at home, the withdrawal of the Irish members from the British Parliament, and the setting up of a popular legislative assembly on native ground. To Parnell, who began with a mild land policy, the doctrine was revolutionary, the appeal was in vain. Davitt, before his time as great spirits often appear to be, felt compelled or was content to come nearer the level of his time, or at any rate of the spokesmen of the farmers. Yet in boldness of a decisive kind he was not lacking. The primary business of the Irishtown meeting that inaugurated the Land League, and whose resolutions he drafted, was to condemn a clerical landlord, and again and again he contested the clerical claim to undue power in Irish life, including the virtual monopoly of the control of education. But in regard to "the land for the people"—in the vital as distinct from the specious platform sense—he was not bold or educatively persevering; he gave way to compromise. Again, he was a Gael, by birth, nature, and conviction, but unfortunately for the nation and its vitality he was not one of those who threw their energies into the work of making Gaelicism a living, growing, and creative factor in the body politic.

When we come to consider his specific relation and services to Labour we must readily admit his greatness as an influence, his energy as a campaigner, his intensity of sympathy with the toilers of all lands; but we have an almost startling sense of the modesty of his demand for the under-men. He suggested in *The Fall of Feudalism* that certain improvements and simplification of the Labourers' Acts would settle the labourers' problem—which has only been trifled with so far. He referred further to "the great triumph for Labour won in the ownership of the land for industry as against monopoly," but little or nothing has been won for the landless man, and far from their due for the small holders; the rights of the community as a whole are unsecured; the land is in the possession of a class, not of the nation. In the *Labour World*, which he conducted from September, 1890, to May, 1891, he stood for better and more democratic organization of labour, demanded that to the community not the landlord should accrue that immense annual increment which is due to general industry and enterprise, and called for the extension of State and municipal ownership and control of such monopolies as could be managed by public bodies in the public interest. Such was the programme for Labour, one with no essence or accent of revolution. One feels sure he would have gone much farther and deeper. His grand unspoiled soul is not to be measured by the actual programme which in difficult days he found feasible. His

influence on the spirit of the workers was uplifting and energising. They felt his power and began to feel their own.

In the years of the Land League it never apparently entered the consciousness of the general pioneer or observer that the labourers were to be anything but under-men to the end of time. It was forgotten that they, too, were the descendants of the dispossessed Gaels; it was forgotten also to a great degree that they were human, that they and their children had potential capacities the training of which would make them great co-operative units in a natural State or Commonwealth. They were never regarded as being on anything like the same human plane as the farmers, the professional, and the parasitic classes. During the Land League years they were repeatedly the subject of the pity and the promises of the orators; but the assumption always was that though their lot would be certainly improved they and theirs would still remain an under-folk, a serving class. From 1883 the Westminster Parliament made sundry efforts to patch their problem, proceeding all the time on the self-same assumption. Much was made, especially by Irish M.P.'s in their congratulatory surveys, of the "amelioration of the lot of the labourer." It was a petty business: the Acts only touched the fringe of the external problem they pretended to meet. Again, they did not apply to cities or urban districts, and until 1903 only concerned agricultural labourers. By that time cottages and

plots had been provided for 17,411 occupants. The wage-earners in agriculture were over 140,800, while there were over 117,800 "general labourers," mainly engaged in agriculture. That is to say, there were over a quarter of a million altogether, and common cottages and plots had been found for less than 18,000. In regard to these latter there was a good deal of grumbling on the part of farmers and their friends. The man with the cottage and the plot was considered too independent, unwilling to bind himself to one "master," or to work when and how the master desired. In short he was in the way of outgrowing the serf habit. As to the Housing Act of 1890 and the four subsequent amending Acts, dealing with cities, towns, and urban districts, they have been much less successful than even the Agricultural Labourers' Acts.

Yes, the Land League was supposed to have effected a revolution, and the Irish Agricultural Organization Society, founded in 1894—three years after the Congested Districts Board began operations from Cork to Donegal, leading amongst other things to the revival of hand-weaving (woollen) and further home industries—was credited with another, more or less, for a number of the farmers. Yet two years after the opening of the twentieth century, Mr. James McCann, M.P., an economist of the wealthier classes who had been for years as a voice crying in the wilderness, found the whole situation still hopelessly wrong, the Irish peasantry—in whom he included

400,000 occupying operative small farmers—robbed, overtaxed, or forced by evil circumstances to emigrate. In *Some Pleas for the Preservation of the Irish Peasantry in the Land of the Inverted Pyramid* (1902), he insisted (as he had often done before) as emphatically as Connolly himself that at bottom and in its roots the Irish problem was material and economic. Everything conspired to crush and extirpate the peasantry, the basis of the nation. The joint stock and savings bank deposits, on which was based the fiction of growing and extensive popular prosperity, he showed in a different and sinister light. They were the produce in their initial stage, directly and indirectly, of the peasant's labour and capital, although not belonging to him, being the tolls and charges of various intermediaries levied on the produce of his land and capital. Mr. McCann took count of the conveniently ignored burdens of indirect taxation. He drew a grim and faithful picture of the struggle of the 400,000 peasants (forming with their families some two millions of human beings). Their holdings were valued for taxation purposes at a maximum of a little over £20, and coming down to £1. They were barely able to live in a good year; in a bad year they were brought to penury and starvation. In fact their fate was "a gamble for existence in a crop of potatoes and turf." And directly related to their doubtful or perilous fortunes were the fate and fortunes of hundreds of dealers, tailors, shoemakers, and others. It was a deplorable, nay a

tragic, position. Mr. McCann broke up grass lands in Meath, initiated local industries—woodworks and a bacon factory—and established the *Irish Peasant* to drive home his ideas for the preservation of the folk whom he saw were the basis, yet the least regarded part, of the nation.

In the cities and towns in those years trade unionism made no significant history. Friendly societies, using the term in its wide and varied sense, pursued their kindly and obscure courses. There are reams of information, statistical and otherwise, to be had about them, but it throws little light on the fortunes of Labour. They had had a fairly long history on this side of the Irish Sea, the oldest mentioned going back to 1766. Up to the beginning of the seventies some 1,500 of them had been enrolled, and from 500 to 600 were supposed to be in existence then; so upwards of two-thirds of them had passed away. Many had come to grief in '46 and '47. At no stage have they had any footing amongst the rural workers.

Of those varied bodies, some of which gradually developed into regular trade unions, not a few were branches of the big English friendly societies, more were Irish and autonomous. There was a similar division in the actual trade unions in Ireland. Of these latter as they stood in the eighties the details are scanty. At the end of the decade some forty furnished particulars to the British Board of Trade, as shown by its Labour Correspondent's annual reviews. In 1894, the year of the founding of the I.A.O.S., and the year

after the humble beginning of the Gaelic League, the Irish Trades Union Congress was established. For that year we have details of 51 Irish unions in the British Board of Trade returns, but for 1895 we have particulars of 93. Those Irish unions were: Bakers and Confectioners (Dublin, Cork, Kilkenny, Waterford, Clonmel) total membership 948; Basket-makers, Dublin, 20; Building trades of various kinds (Dublin, Cork, Belfast, Limerick, Derry, Sligo, Kilkenny), 4,170; Butchers (Dublin, Belfast, Waterford), 929; Cabinet-makers and furniture trades (Dublin, Belfast, Derry), 288; Clothing (Dublin boot-makers), 100; Coachmakers (Dublin), 15; Coopers (Dublin, Belfast, Cork, Limerick, Waterford, Dundalk), 575; Enginemen, 253; Farriers (Dublin and Cork), 170; Irish Glass Bottle-makers, 141; Hairdressers (Dublin and Belfast), 88; Hotel Employés, 80; General Labour (Dublin, Cork, Limerick), 2,192; Metal Trades (Dublin and Belfast), 411; Paper-cutters (Dublin), 50; Printing Trades (Dublin, Belfast, Cork, Clonmel, Waterford), 1,141; Saddlers (Dublin), 100; Seafaring and Dock Labour, 960; Shipbuilding (Belfast shipriggers, Limerick shipriggers, Belfast sailmakers), 91; Textiles (certain trades in Dublin and Belfast, the largest of which were the Flax Dressers and Flax Roughers), 3,987; Land Transport (Dublin, Belfast, Waterford), 767. The total membership of the various Irish unions making returns for 1895 was 17,476 (as against 10,777 the previous year, that of the starting of

the Irish Trades' Union Congress). Other Irish unions belonged to "United Kingdom" federations or amalgamations; yet other unions on Irish ground were branches of British unions. There were seven trades councils, or consultative bodies, in Dublin, Cork, Belfast, Limerick, Derry, Drogheda, and Newry, and the combined membership of the unions of all kinds that they represented was given as 35,786. But at the Irish Trades Union Congress, which met that year in Cork, it was officially stated that the 150 delegates represented about 50,000 trade unionists.

The first Congress met in Dublin, and the action of those leaders responsible for its initiation was criticised by some of the Irish members of the British federations as an act of disloyalty to the "parent" United Trades Congress beyond the Irish Sea! The reply was that the British body had so much business of its own to do that it gave little thought to Irish interests, which were different in character anyway; and furthermore by new rules it had seriously curtailed representation from Ireland. So they had decided on their own Congress—representing Irish unions and Irish parts of bodies with headquarters in Britain. John Simmons was then the secretary. The early Congresses paid much attention to matters in the British Parliament, directly or indirectly concerning workers, and dealt largely in resolutions on grievances and possibilities at home (the possibilities including tourist development!) Amongst the grievances were night-work in bakeries,

sweated and non-unionist labour in some of the firms which had government contracts, and the great proportion of boys doing the work of men in other houses. The majority of the leaders and officials of even the avowedly Irish unions had no forward industrial or social philosophy. At the Cork Congress in 1895 James McCarron of Derry proposed, and Richard Wortley of Belfast seconded, a resolution declaring that the ultimate solution of the labour problem was to be found in the nationalisation of land, also the means of production, distribution, and exchange, McCarron sturdily urging that a co-operative commonwealth was not an impossibility, and was the only way to prevent social injustice. The resolution was considered too sweeping, it would suggest that the members of the Congress were unpractical, that trade unionism was played out, and soforth. Mr. William Field, M.P., said that while he was in favour of land nationalisation, he thought they should bend themselves as practical men to general reform. The theory of socialism was all right if they had to deal with angels and not with human nature. Mr. Field and the reformists carried the day against McCarron by 57 votes to 25.

The following year an Ulsterman till then unknown in Ireland, though he had suffered, studied, and agitated in Scotland, began to preach the doctrines of Thompson, Lalor, and Marx, with pointed application of his own, in Dublin. He stood for an Irish Socialist Republic, something

as far from the imagination of the trade unionists and the toiling masses as the battalions of the Fiann. He was twenty-six, and his name was James Connolly.

Chapter XI.

CONNOLLY IN THE SCHOOLS OF LABOUR.

James Connolly learned in toiling what he taught the toilers. He had sheer and stern experience of many forms of toil in turn. He was a toiler from his childhood. Born near Clones, Co. Monaghan, on June 5, 1870, he had ten years' childhood in Ulster, the family emigrating in 1880 to Edinburgh, where his father obtained work as a corporation dustman. James became a printer's devil in the office of the local *Evening News*, where his elder brother also worked. He was under the age at which the law allowed youth in such a position, but capitalism knows how to circumvent legality; he was mounted on a stool behind a "case" whenever a factory inspector appeared, and thus looked as tall and passable as the law required. One day at the end of a year, the eyes of the law, in the person of the factory inspector, were sharper than usual, the expedient was seen through, and for the little bread-winner on the stool it was a case of down and out. But he got a "job" in a bakery, and loved the new means of support, around which he wove strange fancies. It was the one bakery in the world as he understood it; he was haunted of nights by the fear that it would be burned down, and that hunger and unemployment would reign

and rage. The bakery stood the test of time, but his own health failed, and he was an "out-of-work" again. After a period of anxiety and hope he found an opening in a mosaic tiling factory, where he had a steady run of two years. At the age of eighteen he left the factory and Edinburgh, and had spells as tramp, navvy, and pedlar, eventually settling down for a time in Glasgow. Coming next to Dublin, he met the future Mrs. Connolly. The Irish capital was not to hold him yet; on his father becoming disabled by an accident he returned to Edinburgh and took up the work as dustman. Such were the outer facts of his life to the age of twenty-one, when he married.

The inner facts were even more varied, but though some of them, too, were in their own way all of toil and effort, they were on the whole of a happier order. At least young Connolly had the stress and satisfaction of the confirmed student. He was always a student. Already in those roving and anxious years in Scotland he was an inquirer into the past of his own country and in the ways of general history. Then and later he accomplished a surprising amount of self-education, not only in the way of history and economics but of languages and literature. Novels and poetry in which action was dominant had an unfailing fascination for him. He came to have an intense love of books, not only for their intellectual contents but their formal selves: if visitors handled his prized volumes ungently they brought him a sense of torture.

In his Scottish years he went specially to school to socialism, so to say. The movement was then full of life, meetings and debates were many, and Connolly was often present at the Edinburgh and other gatherings with his uncle, an old Fenian. John Leslie, an active propagandist and speaker, who in his pamphlet, *The Present Condition of the Irish Question,* summed up the Land League from the Labour and Socialist point of view, had a formative influence upon him. The new industrial evangel made an immediate appeal to him. With the thoroughness that already marked him he grasped the Marxian economic doctrine, and set to preach and apply it in his own way. He was soon a successful socialist speaker, though first he had to master a grave impediment in his speech. In the Scots capital he aroused angry opposition, which became intensified when he stood as a socialist candidate in a municipal campaign. He had to resign his post as dustman; he polled just 300 votes; but being both defeated nd unemployed did not daunt him. He tried his luck as a shoemaker, but it was poor luck; the city quarter chosen was not favourable anyhow. He thought of emigrating to Chili, there to tempt fortune as a farmer. Preparations were indeed far advanced when his wife and Leslie dissuaded him from the venture. Leslie urged him to return to their native land and organise an Irish Socialist Party; it well might seem as easy to re-establish the Red Branch chivalry in 1896. But Connolly set forth upon the bold adventure.

In Dublin at first he found a livelihood as a navvy in the main drainage operations, next an occupation as a proof-reader on a Sunday paper. Meanwhile he had interested a little band of workers in his ideas, and had started the Irish Socialist Republican Party. He laid stress on the fact that the highest nationalism and essential socialism were complementary. In the *Shan Van Vocht* (An tSean-Ban Bocht) edited by Miss Alice Milligan, he wrote on the question "Can Irish Republicans be Politicians?" and urged that the political weapon should be used to the utmost—in local as well as parliamentary elections—to spread the republican ideal and lead the way to the revolution. Revolution could not succeed, he insisted, until it had the moral support of the people.

The object and programme of the Irish Socialist Republican Party were set forth in these terms:

> "*The establishment of an Irish Socialist Republic based upon the public ownership by the people of Ireland of the land and instruments of production, distribution, and exchange. Agriculture to be administered as a public function, under boards of management elected by the agricultural population and responsible to them and to the nation at large. All other forms of labour necessary to the well-being of the community to be conducted on the same principles.*

As a means of organising the forces of Democracy in preparation for any struggle which may precede the realisation of our ideal, of paving the way for the realisation of our ideal, of restricting the tide of emigration by providing employment at home, and finally of palliating the evils of our present social system, we work by political means to secure the following measures:

1. Nationalisation of canals and railways.
2. Abolition of private banks and money-lending institutions and establishment of State banks under popularly elected boards of directors issuing loans at cost.
3. Establishment at public expense of rural depots for the most improved agricultural machinery to be lent out to the agricultural population at a rent covering cost and management alone.*
4. Graduated income-tax on all incomes over £400 per annum in order to provide funds for pensions to the aged, infirm, and widows and orphans.

* In a note years afterwards to one of the American editions of *Erin's Hope: The End and the Means*, it was pointed out that sundry adaptations of the collectivist principle, such as popular banks, depots for agricultural machinery, etc., under State Control, embodied in the programme of the I.S.R.P. in 1896, had since been partially adopted on co-operative lines, under the Irish Agricultural Organization Society. "They are now omitted, not because of their impracticability, but because they do not come so directly within the scope of Socialist propaganda, and principally because the rapid development of the trust system on International lines, with its control of food-carrying trade, tends to render negatory the value of such efforts at this late hour."

5. Legislative restriction of hours of labour to 48 per week, and establishment of minimum wage.
6. Free maintenance of all children.
7. Gradual extension of the principle of public ownership and supply to all the necessaries of life.
8. Public control and management of the national schools by boards elected by popular ballot for that purpose alone.
9. Free education up to the highest university degree.
10. Universal suffrage."

The Irish Socialist Republican Party fairly started, Connolly reprinted Fintan Lalor's *Rights of Ireland* and *The Faith of a Felon*, with an introduction in which he declared that the I.S.R.P. stood in much the same position as Lalor occupied in 1848—against the political parties, including avowed Nationalists, all thoroughly conservative on the really fundamental questions of property, hopelessly conservative in their opposition to the claim of the labourer to the full produce of his toil. In March of the following year (1897), appeared *Erin's Hope: The End and the Means*, a series of articles reprinted from Miss Miligan's magazine and the *Labour Leader*. A salient point was his insistence on the social nature of the Irish struggle against English domination: the fight for a wholly different civilization, for the Gaelic system of clan or com-

munal ownership of the land, and the features of life associated therewith, against the alien system of feudalism. In an introduction to *Erin's Hope*, afterwards reprinted in the "Harp Library," he put in a few sentences the pith of his philosophy in regard to socialist patriotism, and the economic, the national, and the international issues:

"The I.S.R.P. was founded in Dublin in 1896 by a few workingmen whom the writer had succeeded in interesting in his proposition that the two currents of revolutionary thought in Ireland —the socialist and the national—were not antagonistic but complementary, and that the Irish socialist was in reality the best Irish patriot, but in order to convince the Irish people of that fact he must first learn to look inward upon Ireland for his justification, rest his arguments upon the facts of Irish history, and be champion against the subjection of Ireland and all that it implies. That the Irish question was at bottom an economic question, and that the economic struggle must first be able to function freely nationally before it could function internationally, and as socialists were opposed to all oppression so should they ever be foremost in the daily battle against all its manifestations social and political."

The national position here taken by Connolly found recognition at the International Socialist Congress held in Paris in 1900. Irish Socialist Republican Party delegates were seated and treated as delegates of the Irish nation, distinct

from England. Of course the other point, the insistence on the social and economic basis of the Irish struggle, may be carried too far. Other elements appeared in this as in most great national struggles. Man in all times and circumstances is much more than a social and economic entity; even when the social and economic urge seems all-pervading.

To return to the work of 1897: in that year also Connolly began the publication of *'Ninety-eight Readings*, reprints from the writings of the United Irishmen. To him Wolfe Tone and his friends, with their radical ideas of democracy and liberty, were an inspiration kindred to that of Lalor, one which he longed to share with his fellow-workers as truly and thoroughly as the other. Before embarking on this enterprise he had attracted more than Irish attention in a very different way: by his organization of the great anti-jubilee demonstration and his manifesto setting forth the social and industrial havoc that had come on Ireland in Queen Victoria's reign. His own social faith was expressed with intensity in this document, which implored the workers to have no more of their paralysing dependence on other classes but to agitate, educate, and organize. It may be noted here that he had kindred experiences during the war against the Boers. He showed his militant national spirit at exciting stages, including the occasion of Queen Victoria's arrival in Dublin in 1900. During the Chamberlain foray he was arrested and fined for attempting

to address a proclaimed meeting. After these experiences he resumed his industrial evangel with renewed zeal.

In November, 1898, he started the *Workers' Republic*, which had fortunes as changeful as his own. The first series ran only to eleven numbers, but of these the later ones have historic interest, inasmuch as they contain the beginning of his *Labour in Irish History*. He was then—after his experiences as navvy and proof-reader—organizer for the Irish Socialist Republican Party, at a salary of £1 a week, paid when funds permitted If the members had not money they had good-will and energy; some of them learned type-setting and printing, and a small press being secured, they were able to turn out the *Workers' Republic*, which was re-issued in May, 1899, as a half-penny weekly. It appeared and disappeared in the next few years in accordance with the state of the funds. In May, 1903, when its fitful but spirited career came to a close for that decade (there was a new *Workers' Republic* in 1915) eighty-five numbers had appeared altogether.

Meanwhile Connolly and his friends, in furtherance of the plan of carrying socialist republican principles to the masses, had contested three municipal elections. When he stood himself for Wood Quay Ward, Dublin, in 1902 and 1903, endorsed by the Trades' Council, on which he represented the United Labourers for a period, his opponents were United Irish League nominees, with clergy and M.P.'s in strong array on their

side. He told Dublin plenty of social and national home-truths during those vehement contests, but only a fraction of Dublin was ready to receive them. Yet the general effect of those few years' teachings of the Irish Socialist Republicans, with Connolly at their head, was considerable. He summed it up himself in a later day in an introduction to an American edition of *Erin's Hope:*

"It is no exaggeration to say that this organisation and its policy completely revolutionised advanced politics in Ireland. When it was first initiated the word 'republic' was looked upon as a word to be only whispered among intimates; the socialists boldly advised the driving from public life of all who would not openly accept it. The thought of revolution was the exclusive possession of a few remnants of the secret societies of a past generation, and was never mentioned by them except with heads closely together and eyes fearfully glancing round; the socialists broke through this ridiculous secrecy, and in hundreds of speeches in the most public places of the metropolis, as well as in scores of thousands of pieces of literature scattered through the country, announced their purpose to muster all the forces of Labour for a revolutionary reconstruction." (Details of the anti-jubilee protest and of sundry other activities followed.)

In 1901 and 1902 Connolly went on lecture tours in Scotland, England, and the United States, spending about four months beyond the Atlantic.

In September, 1903, he emigrated to the States: a course which he came to consider the great mistake of his life. It was an irony, and it was a serious loss to Ireland, though outside the militant labour and republican element nobody realised it, nor recked in the least of the insight and depth of Connolly's teaching. His emphasis on the great revolutionary and reconstructive mission of Labour, working steadfastly in Ireland on the natural Gaelic basis, was little regarded. Yet the Gaelic League had come into power and vigour. But between it and the labour element that followed Connolly there was no connection; few, if any, of its pioneers had met him; some had never heard of him; it was a country of social and intellectual compartments. Pearse, who more than a decade later was to be so deeply influenced by him, was a young man of twenty-three, in the early stage of his editorship of *An Claidheamh Soluis*. Others who typified Gaeldom and Labour in the sacrifice of 1916 had not come into national life as yet. The imagination is haunted by the thought of what might have happened if Connolly, long fighting a sheer struggle for daily bread, and one more intense for the education of Labour, had been a little more favourably situated, and could have had at the same time a definite part in the Gaelic League Organization. Connolly as a Gaelic League pioneer would have made history for the League and for Labour, giving both the possessing and non-possessing classes in the former salutary new points of view

to start with. For many Gaelic Leaguers had need, and still have need, of more Gaolachas, especially of the social species.

However, it was the fate of Connolly to emigrate to America, to work there as linotype operator, machinist, insurance agent, manager, and more; never losing sight of his Irish and Labour ideals, but, on the contrary, working for them day in day out with added intensity. After active experience of American labour and socialist bodies, including the Industrial Workers of the World, he formed the Irish Socialist Federation in 1907. The following year the Federation began the publication of its monthly paper, *The Harp*, with Connolly as editor. Significant stress was laid in the first number on the purpose of the Federation and the paper. Connolly urged the Irish socialist to translate his ideas into terms of Irish thought, instead of breaking the ties that bound him to national organizations and traditions through a foolishly sentimental interpretation of the socialist doctrine of universal brotherhood.

"We propose to show all the workers of our fighting race that socialism will make them better fighters without being less Irish; we propose to advise the Irish who are socialists now to organise their forces as Irish and get again in touch with the organised bodies of literary, educational, and revolutionary Irish; we propose to make a campaign among our countrymen and to rely for our method mainly on imparting to them a correct interpretation of the facts of Irish history past and

present; we propose to take the control of the Irish vote out of the hands of the slimy *seoinini* who use it to boost their political and business interests to the undoing of the Irish as well as the American toiler."

In accordance with his purpose of imparting a correct interpretation of Irish history Connolly proceeded with the publication of *Labour in Irish History* in *The Harp:* he had given heart and mind to the theme since his early manhood. At home that same year Pádraic MacPiarais set himself to revolutionize Irish education by the founding of Sgoil Eanna. Connolly was appointed organizer of the Socialist Party of America the following year; he toured and lectured in that capacity for twelve months, and then he accepted an invitation to come on a lecturing tour in Ireland. In point of fact he had been considering the possibility of return and permanent settlement, and friends in Dublin helped eagerly in the scheme. *The Harp* had already been transferred to Ireland (January, 1910), and was published from the *Irish Nation* office, Jim Larkin acting as sub-editor.

In the first Irish number Connolly published a leading article introducing *The Harp* and a new Labour Policy for Ireland. He hailed all unselfish men and women who worked for social righteousness. He did not demand that they should be at one as to means. He had come to believe, he said, that the theoretical clearness of a few socialists was not so important as the aroused class instincts and consciousness of the mass of the

workers. Therefore he was willing to co-operate with anyone who would aid him to arouse the slumbering Giant of Labour to the knowledge of his rights and duties. He had not altered the views propagated from 1896 onward; he still held that the principles underlying them meant the salvation, social and national, of Ireland. He believed the Irish struggle to be a part of the world-wide upward movement of the toilers of the earth, that working-class emancipation carried within it the end of all national, political, and social tyranny. He held as firmly as ever that the hope of Ireland and the world lay in a revolutionary reconstruction of society, that the working-class was the only class fitted historically for that mission. However, he was prepared to co-operate with all who helped in the industrial and political organization of labour, even though their aim was less ambitious than his own.

After the inculcation of socialist principles the more pressing work for Irish socialists was the proper organization of Irish workers as a coherent whole, under one direction and in one association. That the workers of Ireland be organised in the industrial field not as plumbers, painters, bricklayers, dock labourers, printers, agricultural labourers, carters, shoemakers, etc., but that all these various unions be encouraged to become subdivisions of the great whole whose aim it should be to perfect an organization in which the interests of all should be the interests of each, in which the right of membership should rest not in the pro-

ficiency at any craft but in being a member of the working-class. Such a welding together of all the forces of organized Labour in Ireland would make it possible to effect the settlement of nearly all the questions which had been the stock-in-trade of quack politicians for the previous fifty years or more. The combination would be as dominant and as powerful as the Land League. It would enable Labour to dictate terms.

The aim, then, was the organization of all who worked for wages into one body of national dimensions and scope, under one executive head, elected by the vote of all the unions, and directing the power of such unions in any needed direction. Incidentally, this would create a force which at any time could settle the question of Irish manufacture by refusing to handle all goods whose sale or use in Ireland tended to deprive Irish men or women of a chance of earning their living in Ireland.

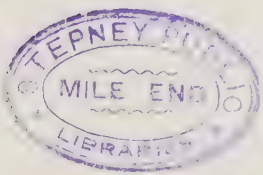
In the April number he laid stress on the class-consciousness of Irish workers despite the theoretical meagreness of their socialist principles. Thus, after the passing of the Local Government Act of 1898 Labour electoral associations sprang up all over the island despite John Redmond's denunciations and appeals.

The Harp continued until June (under Jim Larkin's sub-editorship), when the crisis came with threats of five libel actions. Such was the dramatic news that awaited Connolly on his arrival from America in July.

He set to work forthwith, in what he believed to be an Ireland more ready than before to listen to the gospel of Labour as he understood it. The Gaelic League had given sundry workers a new outlook and inlook, though not in relation to Labour itself. Arthur Griffith and his helpers in the *United Irishman* and *Sinn Fein* had several years' teaching to their credit: and while most of the leaders of the Sinn Fein movement so far had given little study or sympathy to the new vision of Labour their work had deepened and emboldened the national thought of groups of the young. Women pioneers, though primarily concerned with the franchise, had challenged conventions and spread ideas. Francis Sheehy-Skeffington and Fred Ryan, though their *National Democrat* had not succeeded as it deserved, found various outlets for their championship of everything democratic—Skeffington was akin to Connolly in his insistence on the national factor in democracy. In the *Peasant* and the *Irish Nation* a number of writers had given keen attention to Labour, and to social and intellectual reconstruction, from different standpoints; they did much to spread thought and sympathy for the toilers in years when both one and the other were sorely needed.* Larkin had come upon the scene and had set himself to fuse and fire the workers in the very deeps of the industrial pit (at the moment he was in prison). Connolly saw the

*Women contributors, like "Lasairfhiona," were amongst the most distinctive.

bright and the dark, and straight away went to work with a will. He set forth on his lectures in centres as far apart as Dublin, Belfast, and Cork. He was engaged regularly as organizer for the Socialist Party of Ireland, a complex body—containing thoughtful, combative, doctrinaire, and racy elements—in which Peadar O'Maicin, Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, Fred Ryan, Walter Carpenter, R. J. Mortished, and Séamus Ua Pice, were amongst the active spirits. Connolly also joined the new Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, destined soon to make more history than either friends or opponents expected. The year 1910 was further marked by the publication of his critical and powerful pamphlet on *Labour, Nationality and Religion*, but still more by the issue in volume form of *Labour in Irish History*, the fruit of the study and thought of years. Soon came the larger, the epoch-marking, stage for himself and Irish Labour.


TEPNEY
MILE END
LIBRARIES

Chapter XII.

CONNOLLY'S TEACHING—INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM.

"The true revolutionist," said Connolly, "should ever call into action on his side the entire sum of all the forces and factors of political and social discontent." He always acted up to this belief. He relied mainly on the industrial weapon, while looking to political action for help where possible. He did not idolise physical force as a principle or end in itself—the object, the ideal, he insisted, was the primary consideration. He was prepared to adopt physical force if in given circumstances it promised to advance the labour and national cause, but the first point to be thought of was the programme and how best to forward it; the goal and how best to reach it; abstract discussion of physical force in itself had no interest for him. "We believe that in times of peace we should work along the lines of peace to strengthen the nation. . . . . But we also believe that in times of war we should act as in war," he said on the eve of the Rising of 1916. Some three years earlier his founding of the Citizen Army was a typical illustration of his practical militancy as a complement to his industrial constructiveness. But the end in view, the

Promised Land of Labour and Nationality, of the workers as a whole, was ever and always the primary and essential fact in his consciousness and calculations.

In a sense there was no evolution in Connolly's teaching: his voluminous writings, in book and pamphlet and journal, as well as his speeches, all turn on some phase or bearing of the central facts that he had realised at the outset. They are emphasis, illustration, elucidation, not further discoveries. All was explicit or implicit in the programme and teaching of 1896, when he founded the Irish Socialist Republican Party. The object of the party is simply re-stated, but in more detail, as Industrial Unionism, at later stages of his career. Thus in *Industrial Unionism and Constructive Socialism* in *The Harp* of June and July, 1908, reprinted in *Socialism Made Easy*, chapter 5. Here we come to the root of the matter:

"The political institutions of to-day are simply the coercive forms of capitalist society; they have grown up out of and are based upon territorial divisions of power in the hands of the ruling class in past ages, and were carried over into capitalist society to suit the needs of the capitalist class when that class overthrew the dominion of its predecessors. The delegation of the function of government into the hands of representatives elected from certain districts, states, or territories, represents no real natural division suited to the requirements of modern society, but is a survival from a time when territorial influences were more

potent than industrial influences, and for that reason is totally unsuited to the needs of the new social order which must be based upon industry. The socialist thinker when he paints the structural form of the new social order does not imagine an industrial system directed or ruled by a body of men or women elected from an indiscriminate mass of residents within given districts, said residents working at a heterogeneous collection of trades and industries. To give the ruling, controlling, and directing of industry into the hands of such a body would be too utterly foolish. What the socialist does realise is that under a socialist form of society the administration of affairs will be in the hands of representatives of the various industries of the nation; that the workers in the shops and factories will organise themselves into unions, each union comprising all the workers at a given industry: that said union will democratically control the workshop life of its own industry, electing all foremen, etc., and regulating the routine of labour in that industry in subordination to the needs of society in general, to the needs of its allied trades and to the department of industry to which it belongs. That representatives elected from these various departments of industry will meet and form the industrial administration or national government of the country. In short, Social-Democracy, as its name implies, is the application to industry, or to the social life of the nation, of the fundamental principles of democracy. Such application will necessarily have to

begin in the workshop, and proceed logically and consecutively upward through all the grades of industrial organization until it reaches the culminating point of national executive power and direction. In other words, socialism must proceed from the bottom upward, whereas capitalist political society is organized from above downward; socialism will be administered by a committee of experts elected from the industries and professions of the land; capitalist society is governed by representatives elected from districts, and is based upon territorial division. The local and national governing or other administrative bodies of socialism will approach every question with impartial minds armed with the fullest knowledge born of experience; the governing bodies of capitalist society have to call in an expressive professional expert to instruct them on every technical question, and know that the impartiality of said expert varies with and depends upon the size of his fee.

"It will be seen that this conception of socialism destroys at one blow all the fears of a bureaucratic State, ruling and ordering the lives of every individual from above, and thus gives assurance that the social order of the future will be an extension of the freedom of the individual, and not a suppression of it. In short, it blends the fullest democratic control with the most absolute expert supervision, something unthinkable of any society built upon the political state."

Co-operative organization of Labour—of all who

think and work—control by the thinkers and workers of their own business and destinies in their several spheres: land workers, builders, teachers, textile folk, bakers, printers, metal workers, engineers, artists, and so on; direct representatives of the various trades and professions forming the ultimate Council of the Nation (the nation in which all healthy adults are workers with hand or brain or both): such, in brief, is the order. Always remembering the Gaelic essence and flavour—

"We are Socialists," said Connolly in the first number of the *Workers' Republic*, "because we see in socialism not only the modern application of the social principle which underlay the Brehon Laws of our ancestors but because we recognise in it the only principle by which the working class can in their turn emerge in the divinity of *FREEMEN* with the right to live as men and not as mere profit-making machines for the service of others. We are Republicans because we are Socialists, and therefore enemies to all privileges; and because we would have the Irish people complete masters of their own destinies, nationally and internationally, fully competent to work out their own salvation."

Connolly rejected the Fabian view as a whole, but hailed the increase of State and municipal enterprise as a sign of the dispensibility of the capitalist. "But *Socialism* implies *co-operative control* by the workers of the machinery of production; in the absence of such *control* we have

nought but State *capitalism*, as the Post Office at present. Socialism *IS* the ownership by the State [the whole community] of all the land and materials for labour *combined with the co-operative control by the workers* of such lands and materials." So he wrote in the *Workers' Republic*, June 10th, 1899.

He said in his introduction to the edition of *Erin's Hope* in the Harp Library: "Socialism alone can lay the material foundation necessary for the free development of the intellectual forces" of the scattered children of the Gael. Thus Socialism, or Industrial Unionism, is but a beginning, a setting free of the individual and the community for the development and exercise of now dormant or hindered intellectual and spiritual faculties. It is a means to the saving of the soul.

A beginning in one sense, Socialism or Industrial Unionism is a continuation, a development, in another sense. "Everything moves" was an axiom of Connolly's philosophy. Industrial Unionism is not simply a happy or hopeful theory born in the brain of an industrial pioneer or observer and propounded for the consideration or encouragement of the shackled under-men. It comes from toilers themselves, it arises out of the nature of things, it is a resultant of conditions and circumstances, even as capitalism was a resultant of other conditions and circumstances, it is the inevitable new phase of the revolutionary and evolutionary process. His reading of the history of the struggles of mankind against social

subjection, and the mental evolution of the classes in revolt, showed him three stages. In the first period of bondage the eyes of the subject class were always turned to the past: the folk in rebellion tried to destroy the social system and machinery in order to march backward and re-establish the social order of other times—"the good old days" of their fathers. In the second period the subject class tended more and more to lose sight and thought of any pre-existent state of society, to believe that the social order in which it found itself had always existed, and to bend its energies to obtain such amelioration of its lot within existent society as would make that lot more bearable. [Like official trade unionists.] In the third stage the subject class grew revolutionary, recked little of the past for inspiration, but, building on the achievements of the present, set itself to the conquest of the future. The development of the framework of society had shown it its own relative importance, and the fact that within itself there had grown all unconsciously a power which, intelligently applied, would overcome and mould society to its will.

"The rise of Industrial Unionism is the first sign that the second stage of the mental evolution of our class is rapidly passing away. And the fact that it had its inception amongst men actually engaged in the work of trade union organization, and found its inspiration in a recognition of the necessities born of the struggles of the workers, and not in the theories of any political party—this

fact is the most cheering sign of the legitimacy of its birth and the most hopeful augury of the future. For we must not forget that it is not the theorists who made history; it is history in its evolution that makes the theorists. And the roots of history are to be found in the workshops, fields, and factories."

We shall see much more of the teaching as well as the action of Connolly. Here and now and at all stages it is well to be clear as to this central thought of his. In the severe schools of labour on both sides of the Atlantic, in the quiet of the study, and in the stress of the industrial fray, he saw himself pressing onward with the millions (mostly unconsciously) to that inevitable new order in which every sphere of workers would regulate and control its own special work, and the chosen delegates of those varied spheres would be the highest council of the nation—harmoniously related to the kindred working nations.

Since he had first sounded the most thoughtful and comprehensive note ever heard in the Irish labour world, many new experiences had come, but none had changed his central faith and philosophy. And towards the close of the American term, Jim Larkin had begun his mission amongst Irish toilers in deeps that he had never reached or attracted so far. Labour comrades themselves had the feeling or the fear that Connolly was overmuch of the theorist. After his prompt and hearty association with Larkin they began to see him in a new light.

Chapter XIII.

LARKIN'S YOUTH IN THE DEPTHS.

Jim Larkin is the greatest figure in Irish Labour mythology. He has of course very human and realistic significance also, but his first association—possibly we ought to say concussion—with the Irish mind in general was distinctly mythological. To many he is non-human and mythological still. Historians used to hold the view that only after long periods of time did fighters and heroes become transhuman, colossal, legendary, in the racial imagination; latterly there has been a tendency to adopt the theory that the process may be swift if not immediate: that a bold or revolutionary individuality may become a figure of myth and marvel in his own era or the one succeeding it. It is held, for example, that the legendary, as distinct from the real, St. Patrick, was largely a creation of the fifth or sixth century of the Christian era. Whatever we may think of the general application of the theory there is no doubt of its truth in the case of Jim Larkin. He was a legend in less than a year after he had broken with British trade union officialism to extend his labours amongst the under-men in Dublin and throughout his native land. I well remember the swift, strange growth of the marvel,

the dire magic of the sinister, tremendous "Larkin" of the legend, several months before I met the human "Jim" in the actual world. We have seen a good deal already of the long and patient toil, the serious teaching, the deep convictions of Connolly. Now and then his doctrine or criticism had heartened or antagonised elements in Ireland, but his personality had not really come home to the popular mind, had not taken any definite place in its consciousness. Like sensations that are read of in newspapers or novels his light and logic had passed leaving no ultimate trace. Nobody as yet had been really frightened or irritated, though a section had been given guidance and stirred towards enthusiasm. No, apparently neither friend nor foe had felt any sense of mystery, anything of *draoidheacht* on the one hand or diabolism on the other. Larkin came, agitated Belfast, and generally set to work in far obscure quarters of our Irish world, and soon there was a curious sense of something sinister and haunting in the background of life.

It may seem strange to say that his work was in far obscure quarters, seeing that much of it was in Belfast, and more in the capital of Ireland. Yet such was the feeling at first—after the starting of the Transport Union—among most of those, apart from the actual workers concerned, who gave heed to the name and the doings of Larkin. The so-called "unskilled" folk whom he sought to combine and energise seemed remote, and to some extent unreal, to the minds of many who

strove for a regenerated Ireland. This was especially so amongst the Gaelic League pioneers. The under-world of city labour, where Larkin was busy from 1908, seemed far from their experience and imagination. And the drama of Belfast in 1907, in which Larkin had been an enflaming central figure, had apparently left no more impression upon them than a thunderstorm of the last decade. On the other hand, to the most active of the Sinn Fein leaders Larkin was a dangerous intruder and a menace: "The Strike Organiser," nothing personal or human enough to be given a name: a portent, a deadly visitation to be feared and fought like the potato blight or an epidemic.

Yet the school in which Larkin had been made and moulded as a labour revolutionary had been one of pitiful and sometimes terrible realism. From the record we learn not simply the story of an individual but the torture and distortion of a class.

Jim Larkin was born in the neighbourhood of Newry in 1876. He was taken to England in his infancy and brought back at the age of six, attending the local school in Co. Down for half-a-year, till the family fared to Liverpool, where Jim was set to work forthwith. He delivered milk in the mornings and evenings, and worked in a butcher's shop throughout the Saturdays. He was given immediate insight into the resourceful ways of capitalism, as part of the time his business was to chop up fat, value 2d. a lb., to mix among the suet sold at 8d. a lb. The little lad of less

than seven worked forty hours a week for which he received 2s. 6d. plus a penny currant bun and a glass of milk on the Saturday night. "These early experiences are responsible for what some of the respectable trade union leaders call Larkin's want of tact," said George Dallas, Secretary Glasgow I.L.P. Federation, writing of Jim's early fortunes and misfortunes in *Forward*, 1909. He attended school between the milk deliveries, so life had a relieving side; but at the age of nine he felt he had enough of the fat-chopping and the rest of it. Already a big boy, he was able to start as a full-timer with a jobbing painter and paper-hanger, receiving 3s. a week wages as an apprentice. It was his fate to work hard and to learn more of the ways of masters. The new master was a heavy drinker, and in consequence a good deal of extra work was thrown on his latest apprentice, whose wages, however, he substantially increased. Amongst other things it became young Jim's business on occasion to make up the wages list; he thereby made the interesting discovery that his employer had been charging the standard rate of 8½d. an hour for him. He took the first favourable opportunity of letting that worthy know that there was another side to the matter: he claimed half the wages charged, with 6d. an hour overtime. The boss felt that he was not in a position to refuse the demand. Joining the S.D.F. Jim began to think out social problems; that he thought to some effect, despite his extreme youth,

was proved by his conclusion that by remaining at his post he kept a man out of a job. So he went to serve his time as a French polisher. His new master went to Mass every morning, but refused to allow his apprentices to go on holidays of obligation. Young Larkin quarrelled with him over the restriction, and at the end of the quarrel found himself out of employment. In the next seven weeks he tramped and tramped and starved on the roads between Liverpool, London, and Cardiff; he slept in fields, and in barns, and by the wayside; uneasy sleep, when it came, was at least some release from the gnawing hunger. He was not yet eleven years old!

After those weeks of torture, he crawled back to Liverpool, where he had a measure of luck, as it seemed, going to serve as an apprentice at 3s. a week with the firm for which his father had worked for a long period. He stayed two years at the work till on a "Grand National" day he refused to take part in a sweepstake. This led to clash and quarrel, resulting in the dismissal of himself and four other apprentices who were of the same mind as he. He attended meetings of the unemployed with a grimly personal interest. A minor job on relief works fell to his lot, he did odd work at the docks, and then worked his way to Cardiff in search of better things. One day an apprentice engineer accidentally struck him with a huge key, so seriously hurting him that he had to enter a hospital. But the episode had its happy side. The apprentice's father was rich;

he paid Jim's expenses and gave him £1 a week for nineteen weeks. Jim revelled in luxury as he grew convalescent: the library by day, social democratic propagandist meetings in the evenings. It was a joyous burst of life, after boyhood years of toil varied by unemployment and starvation.

Before he was fourteen his fortunes were changed for the worse by the death of his "truest and best friend," his father, for whom, while going early to test fortune for himself, he preserved an intense affection. He gave interesting glimpses and memories of his father, and incidentally of his own youth in a letter to a friend (quoted by Mr. Dallas in his record) soon after he had begun his labour war in Ireland:

"My father was one of the best men I have ever known, one of Nature's gentlemen, and who from a boy had been in every movement for Irish independence, both physical and constitutional. I will never forget Michael Davitt coming to Liverpool during the dock strike, along with Cunninghame Graham. My father, who had had no conversation with Davitt since that escapade at Chester Castle, had an appointment with him in Lord Nelson Street, and took me with him. Davitt had been addressing a meeting of dockers the same day, I think he said, at the waste ground in the south-end of Liverpool. When they met my father reminded Davitt of some little incident that had taken place some years previous. You know what glorious eyes Davitt had, at least I, who though but a boy then, can still see the fire

flashing from them. My father in the course of the conversation mentioned he had not only joined the National League, but he had also enrolled me some years previous, but that I refused to remain any longer a member and had joined a lot of fanatics called Socialists. Davitt turned, and patting me on the head, said—'Let the boy think for himself, Jemmy!' The next time I saw Davitt he was speaking in favour of Hyndman, I think at Burnley. I believed then, as I believe now, that Davitt was a socialist, but he knew the time was not ripe in Ireland to speak out. The only two Irishmen I have ever had a regard for were Fintan Lalor and Michael Davitt. I hope the sod lies light on both."

After the father's death, Jim and his mother tried hard and bravely for some time to keep the home together. "We became vegetarians from necessity, and had a fast every day. Finally I decided to throw up the trade and go down to the docks, so that my eldest brother might finish his time. I joined the National Union of Dock Labourers in 1901, and worked at anything and everything: stevedoring, portering, carting, coal-heaving, carrying bags, bushelling—in fact at every job aboard ship and ashore. Things getting slack, I along with a chum decided to stowaway to the River Plate. So I drew my wages, sent them home to my mother, and went aboard."

It was an eventful voyage from the start. Gaelic literature of the Middle Ages is rich in stories of weird and wondrous voyages, but in all that wealth

of tale there is nothing like the realism of this of Larkin's. Going down the Mersey the vessel was run into, and Jim in his awkward corner thought his career had closed. But he was only in the beginning of adventure. No less than eleven other stowaways were found; but it seems that stowaways were not objected to at that period in those vessels. They had been used to carrying coals in fore-hatch, and came in handy. The mate, who knew Jim, gave him charge of the crowd. It was his lot to do a little leading on behalf of the stowaways:

"After we had broke bulk I called them together, pointed out we had only one change of clothing, and it would be destroyed working coal; they were giving us burgo and molasses for breakfast instead of hash, and those of us who smoked had no tobacco. I suggested writing out our demands, and a deputation sent to the skipper about it. Some said we would be shot for mutiny, but they agreed that an old shell-back named White and I should go. Our demands were—I have the copy before me as I write—' no watches, work from 6 to 6, regular meal hours, same food as crew, each man to be supplied with one set of dongarees and one shirt, plug of tobacco a week, and no work on Sunday.' The captain, Evans by name, was a little chap, and refused point blank. We told him we would work no more, and he replied we would get no food. Knowing some of the firemen I had them posted, and the first thing next morning, as soon as the sailors turned out

and the forecastle crowd were coming forward with the grub, we waylaid them and relieved them of the grub, returned to the forecastle and had breakfast. Then the row commenced; the firemen refused to work without breakfast, and the upshot of the affair was we gained our point. White and I were sent for by the 'old man.' He tried bluffing us, putting us in irons, get us gaoled on arrival in Monte Video, and then not only conceded all we asked, but granted us also an allowance of one bottle of square-faced gin each day. It is unnecessary for me to say that I had no gin, and further I got the crowd to give the gin to the firemen who had stood by us. Before arrival in Buenos Ayres I was agreeably surprised by the mate giving me 25 dollars Argentine, worth at that time 1s. 2d."

In this story there is a good deal to be learned of the character and humanity of Jim and the others concerned. But an episode was to come in which there was no relieving element, apart from his own endurance:

"On the way up to Mobile, I again got at loggerheads with the chief engineer, who was always wanting me to assist the greaser. One night about 2 bells after I had turned in, he sent the donkey-man forward to tell me I had to take one of the firemen's places. I refused; pointed out that I had been working hard all day at coals, and refused to do any more. The chief sent for me; and as I entered the alley-way, I was seized by the chief donkey-man, second engineer, and

third mate, who with other assistance carried me into No. 3 hold, and ironed me to a stanchion, leaving me only a tin of water. What a night I passed! The rats came around me in hundreds. *They ate all my finger-nails and toe-nails.* It makes me shiver even now!"

Such were Larkin's childhood, youth, and early manhood. Such were the schools in which he learned to know, and think for, the under-men.

Chapter XIV.

THE RISE OF "LARKINISM."

I have dwelt in some detail on the early life and ordeals of Larkin, partly that readers in general may see the human individuality through the legendary and mythological figure created by the capitalist fancy and press. The story also prepares us in some degree for the nature of his methods and teaching when, while still a young man, he became a leader of his class and people. By the hostile he was deemed rude, domineering, turbulent, prone to passion and exaggeration; to the detached he seemed vigorous, reckless, racy; to the sympathetic he was often somewhat distressing, and by no means definite and conclusive in his social and industrial philosophy. What were his ideals, and where lay his goal? His harangues and exhortations suggested different conclusions. He advised, exhorted, struggled, and struck from instinct, from an intense pity for the slave class amongst which he had grown; yet from a feeling of pride in its manhood, depressed and distorted though it might be; and from a stern determination to secure fair play. He did not come with any shapely social scheme, he had not leaning or leisure in the way of Utopias; but he had a burning desire to right the immediate wrong, and to go on battling against the next.

He called ugly things by their names, his more than child-like simplicity in this regard being mistaken for calculated daring and the desire to give offence. He said rude blunt things when he and his were cheated and hurt; the life-circumstances described in the previous chapter did not tend to bring a naturally strong and earnest character the doubtful graces of finesse and circumlocution. Through all this two of his most decided characteristics were liable to be obscured: his genuine kindliness of heart and—although he was not always easy to work with—his faculty of conciliation.

Sympathetic, instinctive, impassioned, decisive, he was quite unlike Connolly in his earlier stages as propagandist and leader. Connolly, able to hide his sensitiveness and keep his sympathies well under control, was intellectual, clear-headed, dogmatic, acutely and logically right—too much so for the multitude from 1896 till his departure for America, and indeed on his return. He preached anywhere, from the study to the street-corner, and but a fraction of the multitude responded as yet. Larkin went straight to the men in the workshops and the unions—though he also talked to them in ringing tones abroad—and dwelt far more on what was pressing and painful at the moment than on what might be permanently true or ideally right. He told them home-truths on the subject of their own faults and weaknesses; he spared them no more than the masters. He did not suggest the student or the thinker, though he

had studied and thought to some purpose, loving poetry at least as much as economics. His experiences in the terrible human (or inhuman) school through which he had passed gave him a unique mould and driving force. Below and beyond all there was a magnetic power not easily described. But the under-men felt it from the first, and that made all the difference.

A foreman in a big shipping firm in Liverpool —after his seafaring adventures—he had fraternally come out with the men on the occasion of a dispute and so lost his position. He found service with his union, the National Union of Dock Labourers of Great Britain and Ireland, as an organizer, and at an early stage realised that he could seldom see eye to eye with the official leaders. Higher officials of British trade unions breathe an atmosphere of conservatism, gentility, and tone that the ordinary worker cannot hope to understand. However, Larkin was sent far afield from the central odour in Liverpool, working in Aberdeen for a period, and coming to Belfast in 1907. Thomas Johnson, whose experiences of the north are so long and intimate, dates the beginning of things, the start and stir of life in the Irish labour world, especially of Ulster, from that visit of Larkin's to Belfast. Life had vastly changed in the northern capital, and in Ireland generally, since the years when the hand-loom weavers made their unavailing stand against the capitalist invasion, or even since the nineties when Irish trade unionism was a modest force in those quarters.

Now there were great hosts of workers in the big "lock-ups," and, as with the subject class in the second of the three stages described by Connolly, they had no conception of any other order of society. The life-struggle of the out-workers in the linen trade was intolerably severe, and "unskilled" toilers were in the deeps as elsewhere. British trade unionism had gathered to itself a large proportion of the skilled element, especially of the engineers. There had been democratic moves of a kind: a "Clarion Fellowship," and eventually a full-blown socialist society that tried hard to keep clear of Irish national issues. William Walker and others, whose spirit was expressed in a *Labour Chronicle*, had done a good deal of campaigning, including a couple of unsuccessful incursions into the parliamentarian arena. The nature of William's political and social-democratic faith was shown in the course of a controversy with Connolly at a later stage in *Forward*. The only particular point in a welter of words was his declaration that he spoke the same language and studied the same literature as British socialists, and so (to put it briefly) was of their fold and spirit. The Orange toilers, who in their human capacity were no more appreciated by the capitalists than the hand-loom weavers had been, had begun to give some thought to their position as wage-slaves, but were still concerned and confused by the Battle of the Boyne, and still blissfully ignorant of the fact that in the struggle of which that

practically drawn battle was an episode the Pope was on the side of King William! The mention of the Orange workers brings us to the most significant outcome of Larkin's organizing and exhortation in Belfast. It is not the outcome of which most, or indeed much, has been heard. The uprising of the "unskilled" forces was on a large scale; the great strike of the carters, the lesser strikes of the dockers and coalmen, wrought sensation far and wide, not of course on account of the grievances and ordeals of the men, but because of the stormy scenes that accompanied the efforts to suppress the social revolt: scenes culminating in the calling out of military forces and in bloodshed and death. (Much resentment was caused by the fact that the military were sent to the Falls Road, while the actual scenes of the social revolt were enacted in the docks and main thoroughfares.) The "settlements" effected by Dublin Castle and Board of Trade mediation were only compromise and patch-work. No, the great outcome was none of these. It was the early success of Larkin in showing Orange workers how they were both exploited and gulled and that their real fate and fortunes were bound up with those of the Catholic wage-slaves. He addressed a great meeting of Orange and Catholic workers at the Custom House on the 12th of July! Against the dreaded junction of Orange and Catholic toilers Belfast capitalists and their press directed sustained and sinister efforts; day by day the old factors of

bigotry and fanaticism were worked with unholy zeal. They had their effect eventually, but the good was not wholly undone.

While Belfast was his centre Larkin paid visits to Dublin, intent on organizing "unskilled" workers in the capital. To one of less grit and force it might well seem a forlorn hope. The folk in question had been mostly ignored or given up as hopeless by the older trade unionist leaders. In sooth it would not be unfair to say that they were not wanted or even considered by the majority of the strict and conventional unionists. "Solidarity" was little of a philosophy in those days amongst those who guided the placid course of the unions, and it certainly did not extend to the "lower" ranks of toil. The majority of the "aristocracy of labour," the proud and exclusive skilled artisans and craftsmen, had scant feeling of kinship with the weaker brethren, the dockers, carters, and casual labourers, who lived mostly in slums, and were dominated and victimised by slum-owners, money-lenders, publicans, and more. Apart from what societies of general labourers and others had heard from Connolly in the later nineties and early in the new century little hint of Labour's forward philosophy and spirit had reached this harassed, discontented, and generally helpless host; while the newer movements, like the Gaelic League, Sinn Fein, and the Industrial Revival, such as it was, were all remote from them. Jim Larkin had come down on a big adventure, and, though it was not realised till a

few years later, something far greater than the starting of a trade union, Irish or English, was at issue. Unknown to leaders and followers the inlook and outlook of Irish Labour were to be changed. The question was not an organization but an evangel.

Larkin's progress in the new arena was slow for a time; he secured but a few hundred recruits the first year; in the second he was more successful. His personality had begun to tell even in the deeps of Dublin. The wiser and more sympathetic of the regular leaders began to appreciate his success as an organizer; but something deeper than organization had been effected; the commonest of the "common people" had at last seen a gleam and had begun to follow it. That year (1908) was destined indeed to mark a turning-point in Larkin's own career and in the story of Irish Labour. Partly out of the action and interaction of clash and trouble in Cork and Dublin rose the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, to-day the most powerful and progressive of our Irish unions. Very singular is the story, with its occasional sensations. Larkin went to Cork, that fair city with its own deplorable nether world of labour, and there the "Strike Organiser" promptly helped to settle a strike—one of the various outcomes of trouble between the Cork Steampacket Company and the under-workers. Subsequently there was a renewal of trouble, owing to the incoming of British workers whose presence the Corkmen resented, deeming them

members of a bogus union. It seems that the English Shipping Federation insisted on the Cork company retaining them. As Larkin put it in an explanatory circular:

"This is English domination with a vengeance; this is how they deal with their unemployed in England; ship them over here—30s. per week, lodging, food, and drink free for English imported scabs—22s. 6d. per week for Cork workers."

Even as he worked with a will up and down the land, and discovered that trade unionism in Ireland must be distinctively Irish to begin, a tricky class law caught Larkin in its toils. The story seems scarcely credible to-day. In brief he was charged with conspiring, with certain other persons, to defraud a number of quay labourers in Cork city by obtaining from them subscriptions to the National Union of Dock Labourers of Great Britain and Ireland (headquarters, Liverpool) and not applying the money to the purposes for which the subscribers intended it. What really happened was that serious disaffection arose regarding the treatment of locked-out Dublin coal-workers—and subsequently Dublin carters who went on strike—by the executive committee of the union (in Liverpool); that the strikers called Larkin, who was then in Derry, to their assistance; that the Cork quay men (not yet affiliated to the British union) determined to render financial aid to their brethren in Dublin; that they remitted £64 from their funds, through Larkin, with that object; that a balance-sheet and sworn

declarations showed conclusively how this money was duly disbursed to the men on strike in Dublin; yet the counsel for the crown, in his closing address to the jury, made the novel and amazing suggestion that Larkin had fraudulently converted it to his own use. The balance-sheet and sworn declarations had not been produced at the trial because Larkin's counsel considered them irrelevant—the charge centred on the technical point of turning funds subscribed for a British union to Irish purposes—and the judge, before luncheon, had seemed to think there was no case against him. He was sentenced to a years' imprisonment with hard labour! The amazing developments and sentence created indignation outside capitalist circles. (At the magisterial investigation Sir Edward Fitzgerald had said: "There was not a fair-minded man in Cork but had the idea in his head that if there was a conspiracy at all it was a conspiracy to prevent the working-men of Cork from having any organization for their self-defence in the future.") A memorial to the Lord Lieutenant was signed by varied orders of Irish people who incidentally paid tribute to the unselfishness of Larkin throughout his career. A study by Daniel Corkery in the *Leader* deserves to be noted, in the first place for its own illuminating interest, and secondly as one of the very earliest tributes from the Irish intellectual world to the significance of Larkin in the deeps. Mr. Corkery referred to his earlier impressions of Larkin, declared that his estimate of the man had

not fallen, and then subjected trial and sentence to a delicately searching criticism:

" I took him to be a man of ideas, some of them wrong but most of them right, or at least right according to my lights. I saw in him a powerful advocate of temperance and an apostle of nationality. I regarded him as one earnest to a fault, for I never heard him speak to the class for which he stood that he did not half offend them by dwelling on the failings which kept them powerless and timid. And in my estimate was much of pity, because I saw that the man stood alone and guideless; by dint of experience, he had slept in every workhouse from Land's End to John-o'-Groats; by dint of reading it was his custom to quote poetry as freely as I would myself if I had more courage; by brooding and thinking on problems that for his companions must practically have had no existence—he had raised himself so much above his fellows that he deceived himself if he believed he could find lieutenants in their ranks. Here is a drama for any Ibsen that cares to write it—the failure of a leader of the democracy to find lieutenants."

Larkin was released by order of Lord Aberdeen on October 1st, 1910, after having undergone three months of the sentence and some disgraceful prison treatment. But his power for good in the nether Dublin and Ireland had been greatly increased.

The charge and trial related to events of 1908, the year of the starting of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. Larkin and others had

made up their minds that the Irish under-men must fight their own battle in an independent organization, not as a section of a British union. The new body was registered as a trade union at the beginning of 1909, and soon gave earnest of its quality under the thorough-going leadership of Larkin.

The better minds in the Dublin labour world, some young men amongst them, took heart anew. Theirs had been a rather hopeless feeling for some years. They felt that there was no real labour movement in the metropolis, trade unions and trades council notwithstanding. We have an illustration in the fact that when Thomas MacPartlin, keen on his Gaelic study, was elected by the Carpenters' Society to represent it at the Dublin Trades Council he had grave doubts about the good of going there at all. He consulted his Irish teacher, Peadar O'Maicin, who urged him to be in and of the labour movement, as new blood of all things was required. The Labour Party which had been elected to the Dublin Corporation after the extension of the franchise had turned out a complete failure, and this had reacted on the rank and file. In the Trades Council there were workers' representatives, so-called, whose ideal seemed to be soft jobs and quiet lives for themselves and their relations. and for that reason desired that nothing should be said or done to give offence to any political party, any public man, or any employer. All the time in the Trades Council, as well as at the Irish Trades Union Congress, there

was a small minority who believed that the workers should aspire to greater things, so now and then the faithful few raised the discussion of big social questions and urged the formation of a live Political Labour Party. They did not get much farther; they had the easy-going, do-nothing leaders against them, and they had no powerful spokesman (Connolly being in America) till the coming of Larkin. They took kindly to Jim, though not always agreeing with him. The old-fashioned leaders took very unkindly to him, especially when he began to tell them home-truths, and to attack them for not acting straight to the workers, as he believed. They tried hard to compass his overthrow, they sought to have him expelled from the Irish Trades Union Congress. So in those initial years Jim Larkin, with his faithful and forward few had to fight the capitalists and the class-law without, and the laggards of Labour within.

After Connolly's return and Larkin's release from prison in 1910 a new breath of life was evident in the movement amongst the "unskilled," the rising under-men. Knowledge of industrial facts and issues was set forth in a vigorous and racy way that was new in town and country. Larkin and the Transporters, however, did not trouble overmuch about social philosophy; energy was concentrated on the removal of immediate grievances. In fact something like Connolly's watch-word, "Less philosophising and more fighting" came to be the order. A hearty spirit of

comradeship was sought to be cultivated and exercised: "an injury to one is an injury to all" came to be a truth in operation, not simply a pious opinion. The policy of the swift "sympathetic strike" came to be utilised to an extent that embarrassed and alarmed the profiteering class. Connolly had expounded that policy years before as an organiser of the Industrial Workers of the World (in the United States) who worked in a broad way for a great scheme of unions and branches merging in the One Big Union, an underlying idea being that no new order can replace the old until it is capable of performing the work of the old, and performing it more effectively for human needs. He wrote afterwards in the *New Age:*

"As one of the earliest organisers of that body I desire to emphasise also that as a means of creating in the working-class the frame of mind necessary to the upbuilding of this new order within the old we taught, and I have yet seen no reason to reconsider our attitude on this matter, that the interests of one were the interests of all, and that no consideration of a contract with a section of the capitalist class absolved any section of us from the duty of taking instant action to protect other sections when said sections were in danger from the capitalist enemy. Our attitude always was that in the swiftness and unexpectedness of our action lay our chief hopes of temporary victory, and since permanent peace was an illusory hope until permanent victory was secured, temporary

victories were all that need concern us. We realised that every victory gained by the working-class would be followed by some capitalist development that would in the course of time tend to nullify it, but until that development was perfect the fruits of our victory would be ours to enjoy and the resultant moral effect would be of incalculable value to the character and the mental attitude of our class towards their rulers."

These doctrines had come to be things of daily application in Ireland under the leadership of Larkin and Connolly himself—for the latter was appointed Belfast organizer and Ulster district secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union in 1911—though the new means and methods came to be summed up and stigmatised generally as "Larkinism." Not that the name greatly mattered; the actuality was the inspiration, or the outrage, according to the point of view. The procedure was thorough. The leaflets circulated in connection with particular grievances and strikes were often quite brutally frank: "shocking," some thought; but it was the facts that were really shocking. Effective as these tactics were, bringing relief and a taste of joy to hundreds of humble workers and homes, they were but part of the activity of the union: the work, when needed, was on a broad and bold scale. How unselfish and generous the new pioneers could be was pointedly shown by their action in the struggle of the sailors and firemen against the Shipping Federation in 1911. When the dispute

began the sailors were not members of their own union. The I.T.G.W.U. organized them, paid them their strike pay while the struggle lasted, and at its close passed them over in a body to the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union. Their part in the fight cost the Irish Transporters and their friends over £5,000. In Wexford, Waterford, Belfast, Sligo, and other ports they came to be engaged in strenuous fights, gladly giving their support to men engaged in strikes and struggles for better conditions. The minor battles were many. The union and its methods came to be hated by employers and farmers, "Larkinism" to be regarded as something at once irresponsible and noxious, something quite foreign to Irish character and traditions. It was all undoubtedly something new in trade union tactics in Ireland, and apart from its methods it was moved by a faith that in modern days was rather novel on Irish soil—the faith that all the workers were brothers; that all were being robbed of more or less of the fruits of their toil, that the circumstances of the "unskilled" were particularly inhuman and demoralising; that "shock" tactics, intermittent guerilla warfare, were often the only means of securing an instalment of social justice; that no instalment could be regarded as more than temporarily satisfactory; that given the opportunity the fight would be renewed again and again till more instalments were secured; that the end was a co-operative commonwealth: in which all who were able to do so would work, with hand or

brain or both, and all the co-workers be controllers in their various industries.

To the employers these articles of faith and practice, so far as they seriously considered them at all, were not only revolutionary but incomprehensible. They regarded the social and industrial system they knew as part of the order of Nature: classes all the way, and a surplus of "unskilled" labour at the bottom something within the fitness of things. Capital was the heart and stay of everything, and exploitation by means of it simply "business." Those who through their possession of capital, and the ability to control and exploit labour, were enabled to build up industries and control profits were pillars of society to whom the workers should be grateful for the opportunity of earning wages. Workers as co-operators and controllers of industry was something outside the range of their consciousness, but they could understand working men (and to some extent even working women) desiring more wages, for from time to time they had come up against this hunger of the proletariat. But there was a regular way to present these demands, and if even the wilful and wanton expedient of a strike were to be forced, it should of course be in due form, like a national or imperial declaration of war after diplomats and negotiators had failed. The sudden "sympathetic strike," the impudent refusal to handle "tainted goods," and all such methods of "Larkinism" and Connollyism, were on a par with conspiracy and assassination. So employers felt; numbers of the

older type of trade unionists were with them in large degree; while press, professions, most churchmen, and practically all the politicians, were entirely acquiescent. The old Gaelic order and the co-operative spirit of Christianity had no place in the general Irish consciousness. Larkin and his kind should be treated as outlaws.

That feeling was intensified when the Irish Co-operative Press was established and the *Irish Worker* started in 1911. Larkin's "Call to Arms"—in other words his appeal to the workers to take shares in the Co-operative Press and enable the *Worker* to live and strike—was very characteristic:

"During the recent skirmish between Labour and Capitalism in Ireland you got a foretaste of how your bowelless masters regard you. Their kept press spewed foul lies, inuendoes, and gave space to the knaves of our own class for the purpose of garotting our glorious movement. At present you spend your lives in sordid labour and have your abode in filthy slums; your children hunger, and your masters say your slavery must endure for ever. If you would come out of bondage yourself must forge the weapons and fight the grim battle.

"The written word is the most potent force in our modern world. The *Irish Worker* will be a lamp to guide your feet in the dark hours of the impending struggle; a well of truth reflecting the purity of your motives, and a weekly banquet from which you will arise strengthened in purpose to

emulate the deeds of your forefathers, who died in dungeon and on scaffold in the hopes of a glorious resurrection for our beloved country."

He had no reason to complain of want of appreciation and support as editor. In June 26,000 copies were sold, in July 66,500, in August 74,750, in September 94,994. For Irish weekly proletarian or democratic journalism the circulation was astonishing; and it might have been much greater; the modest machinery was unable to meet the demand. As to the character of the paper under the editorship of Jim it was much as the foregoing appeal might lead one to expect. It was rudely and crudely truthful, shockingly to the point in regard to the manners and customs of employers. It wounded sensitive souls and outraged the feelings of stylists. It did not pretend to appeal to the finer feelings of its friends, and it consistently showed the worst side of its enemies. The most lamentable thing about it was the need for its exposures and denunciations. It was a painful revelation of the anti-social, exploiting, and degrading elements in Ireland. Dealing with sores and sins in a way that was drastic and unabashed it made " Larkinism " more feared and more hated than before. Ending or even mending the things that made " Larkinism" possible was not thought of by the critics.

However, Larkin in those years made his lowly " unskilled" followers a solid power. Fighting shameful sweaters, exposing gross inhumanity, steadily raising wages: that was one side of the

story and the progress. The other was the effect on the workers themselves. They became self-reliant, temperate, co-operative, energetic. Their home-life was appreciably brightened. Larkin kept a stern eye on the weaker brethren, until they grew stronger. Liberty Hall, the Transport Union centre, became a joyous institution, a place of social rallies and studies as well as affairs; under Larkin's direction his sister Delia went on with the organization of women workers; Croydon Park, the union grounds, became in due course the scene of wider work and activities. Industrial Sinn Fein was in operation in a promising way, and there was hope of new departures in the co-operative order.

Meanwhile it had been found possible to induce forward spirits amongst Dublin workers to form a Dublin Labour Party whose object was "to unite the forces of Labour in order to secure the election of independent Labour representatives to parliament and local government bodies." William O'Brien, Richard O'Carroll, Thomas MacPartlin, and Thomas Farren were elected officers of the party, which got to work in the middle of 1911. In the following January nine of its candidates, including Larkin, won seats on the Dublin Corporation, after a contest in which splendid propagandist work was done. Opponents succeeded in getting Larkin removed from the Corporation on the ground that he had been in prison on a criminal charge—the tricky class-law technicality described above. Jim took the mean move against

him philosophically. He knew that the good work of the election and the electors could not be undone, and he had plenty of scope for his energies outside the Municipal Council.

He had a bold and cheery way with greater opponents. In March, 1912, a Transport Union meeting was arranged in Sligo. Larkin went over, and during Mass on the morning of the meeting, he listened to a letter from the bishop of the diocese, Dr. Clancy, addressed to " the Catholic people of Sligo and of the adjacent parishes," and dealing with the meeting and the " noted leader of the socialistic movement in this country" who was to address it:

"I avail myself of this opportunity (said the Bishop) to state that his public utterances since he assumed to himself a prominent position in the direction of Irish affairs have been distinctly of a socialistic tendency; that in consequence he is distrusted by the members of the Irish Parliamentary Party, and that his name is associated in many minds with incidents which render it highly undesirable that the good people of Sligo should allow themselves to be allured into a false position by his pretended sympathy with the poor. I therefore expect and hope that no respectable citizen of our town or county and no faithful member of the Church will take part in the meeting at which this man is advertised to speak. . . .

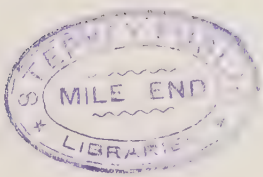
". . . . At the present crisis in the industrial life of this country our priests can be reckoned on, if asked to do so, to take the part of

the poor, but the moment the workingman turns from the priest and employs the assistance of the Socialist to remedy the evils of his condition, he immediately alienates all sympathy and brings not only the condemnation of the Church but God's displeasure on his action."

These strictures throw a flood of light on the inlook and outlook of conservative churchmen, who boldly identify not only the Church itself but the Creator with their own economics and capitalistic notions. The meeting took place in due course, despite the bishop's appeal to the respectable and the faithful. Larkin declared that he cared for the bishop so long as he kept in his own domain, but when his lordship entered politics, while he could go his way, Jim Larkin would continue on his own chosen route. The land belonged to the people of Ireland and must be controlled by the people in the interests of the people. Dr. Clancy said that was socialism. Well and good! He came to preach the doctrine of discontent. The poor were robbed of everything. If they had more of the good things of this life they would have more opportunities to think of the future life. Thus he went on in his characteristic style, and in closing the meeting he called for cheers for the bishop who, he said, might be mistaken in his ideas.

Lady Gregory, a decade earlier, in her introduction to a little book entitled *Ideals in Ireland*, dealt in a quaint and fanciful way with certain noted and constructive individualities of our

generation. She said, for example, that "Æ" had put his mystic light into a turnip lantern, to the great advantage of the turnip; that Douglas Hyde stooped down to make an earthenware candle-stick, but when he lifted his head he found it was not a candle he had lighted, but a star he had discovered, "and it is now lighting up all the western sky." Other life-warming and life-changing lights were to come. Jim Larkin, moving amongst despised dockers, carters, and land-slaves, lit fires that at one and the same time were beacons, bewildering portents, and irritants. It took a long time for even idealists to see that the flame he brought was but part of the Gleam and the Ideal that had never died in his race. The Kingdom of Heaven is within us, we know from the Gospel; but who had sought for it hitherto amongst the slums and "unskilled" slaves of Dublin?


MILE END
LIBRARIES

Chapter XV.

UP FROM SLAVERY IN ULSTER.

Connolly, as noted in the previous chapter, took charge of the affairs of the Transport and General Workers' Union in Ulster in 1911. Cathal O'Shannon, young as he was, came to be a helper in the office in Belfast. His social and national ideals had found frequent expression in the *Peasant* and *Irish Nation;* he was palpably of the mind and mould likely to be attracted and stimulated by Connolly. The latter developed, not indeed in his basic ideas, but in his mood and method, as he warmed to the new work. Down among the workers, like Larkin, he showed a more intense humanity than in early propagandist years.

He was soon in the stress of stirring affairs in the north, and was now and then called southward to help in the direction of others equally exciting. He was down in Dublin in July when there was a lock-out in the coal-trade. At one of the mass meetings in Beresford Place, after striking a strong international and industrial unionist note, he told his friends how the waters were stirring in Ulster. In Belfast the workers were not as strong as they were in Dublin, because the old policy of dividing them was in progress. In some places in the past it had been union

against union; in Belfast it was religion against religion.

"But we of the working classes are getting slowly and gradually into our heads that so long as the masters make no distinction as to whom they will employ, be they Catholic or Protestant —but were quite ready to get profit out of them— we will refuse to allow religion to divide us in our unions. I don't care where a man worships, but I do care where he works, and I do care where he gets his pay on a Saturday night. I don't care where a man worships, but I do care that he has a man's rights allowed to him, and that he is a man standing along with his fellows in the common battle for the uplifting of the human race."

In the *Irish Worker* in the last week in August he gave a moving account of the conditions of the port of Belfast. He declared that its record as regards Labour had been one of martyrdom. They had a grim example of the evil of want of organization. Disruption of the union and "speeding up" had demoralised the dockers, leaving them spiritless and powerless after Larkin's departure from the city. In order to extract the last ounce of energy a system of bonuses had been introduced among the grain labourers. For an additional *one-fifth* of a day's work crowded into the ten hours *one-tenth* of a day's pay accrued. By tips to winchmen, firemen, etc. the situation was made worse. The pace was kept up on the unfortunate fillers and carriers by curses, obscene language, and even physical violence, along with the ever-

present threat of dismissal, while tallymen and checkers were forbidden to reveal the actual tonnages being done until the day's end. Hence (while 100 tons had been taken as the daily average) 160, 180, and 200 tons as a day's work came to be regarded as in no wise remarkable. *One* man had to carry this weight over his back from hatch to ship-rail in each gang. All day long other men toiled in the suffocating hold, barefooted, half-naked, choked with dust; while tubs rushed up and down over their heads with such rapidity that the men's muscles were strained to breaking-point and the feverish recklessness was a constant menace to life and limb. Men could not retire for any purpose without paying a substitute. Accidents were common. Rarely could men do three days' work in succession.

Connolly set himself to change the whole terrible order. He agitated up and down the docks, urging solidarity. Recruits were slowly gathering when it was discovered that the Head Line, the Ulster S.S. Co., had refused to pay the Belfast seamen and firemen on the "Innishowen Head" the same rate of wages the firm paid in the British Channel. Connolly and Bennett, secretary of the Seamen's and Firemen's Union, called upon the dockers on that vessel to come out for the sailors and themselves. Before night 600 men were out. Financial assistance came from Dublin, and the strike ended in the addition of 3s. a week in wages, and improved conditions. The daily average was fixed at 100 tons, any gang doing more to be regarded

as "scabs." Speeding up and intimidation were done away with. It was declared that a renewal of slave-driving would mean a strike for the offender's dismissal. Similar conditions were gained for timber labourers and for men on general cargo. Increase of wages all round, abolition of slave-driving, complete unionising of all labour on foreign-going vessels, and the spread of the Transport Union round the Coal Quay: such was the general record. Union conditions were enforced for seamen and firemen on all ships coming into the Low Dock, tools being downed on a dozen occasions to realise this full result. Thus the battle went on abroad, while on the inner side of things, in the Union centres in York Street and Corporation Street, were social rallies and intellectual opportunities for the members. Movement and solidarity were needed in the mental order as in the other.

There was frequent resort to Direct Action, long familiar to Connolly in both theory and practice (in the I.W.W. Organization in the United States). He described it himself as "ignoring all the legal and parliamentary ways for obtaining redress of the grievances of Labour and proceeding to rectify those grievances by direct action upon the employer's most susceptible part—his purse." It was to be used with judgment and discrimination. A typical instance of its working: Dixon's timber labourers were locked out in Dublin. As soon as the news arrived the Transport Union men ceased work in Dixon's

yards in Belfast. The Dublin men were reinstated and given their wages for the lost day. A noted case was the use of Direct Action to clear the character of trade unionists. A dock labourer named Keenan was killed at the unloading of a ship, owing to the fact that a bag was released just a moment too soon by one of the carriers; shooting down the lift it struck and killed Keenan. Indirectly the tragic accident was due to the demand to the men to rush the work before breaking off for meals. The merchant's solicitor, however, suggested that the poor man had been killed because he was a non-unionist. In point of fact he had promised to join, or re-join, the union, and had been given a few days' grace to go up to the offices and make good—he was an old docker. In the Belfast press and the city generally there was much comment on the insinuation, but the union took prompt action. At dinner-time the men employed on the merchant's ship, the "Nile," were told to cease work until the merchant repudiated the insinuation or disclaimed all responsibility for it. The men duly responded, and an official of the vessel sent post-haste for the merchant and asked Connolly through one of his foremen to wait on the spot for him. A harbour constable came along, ordered Connolly off, and began to use force. Connolly informed the constable that he would take the men off to where he could talk to them. In ten minutes 600 men had followed him, and the Low Docks were empty. Ten minutes later still a district superintendent,

merchants, managers, detectives, etc. were hurrying to the union rooms, urging that the men should go back, and "everything would be arranged." Within an hour it was so. The solicitor, after protesting that he would not be dictated to by the dockers, drew up a letter to the press disclaiming any intention of imputing evil motives to the members of the union. The letter duly appeared in all the Belfast papers. Furthermore, the harbour master declared that he regretted the action of the constable, that the like would not be allowed to happen again, and that Connolly would be allowed to go anywhere in the docks or ships at all times. The Direct Action and the result had naturally a considerable effect upon the minds of Belfast workers.

In the *Irish Worker* for the last week of October, 1911, Connolly revealed some of the extraordinary conditions of industrial Belfast in his story of the mill strike. Ulster linen manufacturers had agreed to curtail the output 15 per cent., and so the mills were put on short time, but the individual manufacturer proceeded to speed up his machinery in order to get as much out of the short time as the full time. This of course was a violation of the spirit of the agreement, and a curtailment not of output but of wages. New rules were introduced. There were fines for laughing, whispering, or even fixing the hair. Instant dismissal was the penalty for bringing a newspaper, a pennyworth of sweets, darning or knitting needles into the mill. "The whole atmosphere

of the mill was an atmosphere of slavery. The workers were harassed by petty bosses, mulcted in fines for the most trivial offences, and robbed and cheated in the most systematic manner. If a spinner whose weekly wage averaged 11s. 3d. lost a day's work, stayed out a day, she was fined 2s. 7d., a sum out of all proportion to her daily wages. The same was true of the half-timers and the doppers—little children."

A strike ensued, as might have been expected. The spinners marched out, and all others in their department followed. Altogether over 1,100 women and girls came out, and at their own request were organized by Connolly. No other trade unionist leader gave them any help or encouragement. The employers threatened to lock-out the women. Miss Mary Galwey of the Textile Operatives' Society and Mr. Greig of the Amalgamated Union of Labour arrived at the factory gates on the day the lock-out was to commence, and advised the women to return. Cheering they flocked round Connolly, and the struggle was under his control thenceforward. At a meeting in St. Mary's Hall, packed to every corner, 3,000 enthusiastic girls and women—"and not a hat amongst them"—passed a resolution welcoming the establishment of a textile branch of the Transport and General Workers' Union, condemning as a disgrace to civilization the conditions sought to be imposed in the mills, welcoming the strike, and recommending the strikers to the sympathy and support of the Belfast public. As a

result of processions and of meetings in the streets the sympathy and support of the Belfast public materialised simply to the extent of £87. Strike pay of only 2s. a week was available for each of the 1,100 women. Connolly knew that it was a peculiarly bad season in which to stand out for higher wages, but he thought he could teach the strikers some valuable lessons. When he had won their confidence he unfolded his plan. He told them to go back to work and break systematically each and every one of the harsh and absurd rules.

"If a girl is checked for singing (he said) let the whole room start singing at once; if you are checked for laughing let the whole room laugh at once; if anyone is dismissed all put on your shawls and come out in a body. And when you are returning do not return as you generally do but gather in a body outside the gate and march in singing and cheering."

These tactics proved telling. The women and girls "went in singing, and when the boss did not like it came out singing again." An angry manager who sent home a specially songful girl was obliged to send again for her, and work was only resumed when he brought her into the room, where she was greeted with cheering and singing all round. In this way the whole atmosphere of the mills came to be changed. Slave-driving gave way to laughter, song, and pleasant chat, and of course the work in no wise suffered. Such is the story of how Connolly brought song and gaiety

into the dreary mill-world of Belfast, in its way a joyous human revolution.

And this deep-hearted, strong-souled pioneer has been criticised for a materialistic standpoint, an insistence upon the needs of the body alone! Some of our spiritual enthusiasts (who are not overzealous in making straight the way of the spiritual in everyday life) would apparently have had him speak the language of Thomas à Kempis amidst the horrible conditions of Belfast and nether Dublin. He addressed himself to pitiful immediate actualities, but of course it is grossly unfair to suggest that he ignored the ideal and the spiritual. He had carefully studied the means and the way to the goal that was after his heart and spirit. He wrote in the *Irish Worker*, Christmas, 1912:

"Considering the state of slavery in which Irish workers are to-day, a state of restlessness, of 'divine discontent' on the part of Labour in Ireland is an absolute essential pre-requisite for the realisation of any spiritual uplifting of the nation at large. With a people degraded, and so degraded as to be unconscious of their degradation, no upward march of Ireland is possible; with a people restless under injustice, and resolved, if need be, to peril life itself in order to end such degradation, tho' thrones and empires fall as a result—with such a people all things are possible: to such a people all things must bend and flow . . . . A small nation such as Ireland can only become great by reason of the greatness of

soul of its individual citizens. It is therefore a matter of sincere congratulation to every lover of the race that the workers of Ireland are to-day profoundly discontented, and, so far from being apathetic in their slavery, rebellious to the point of rashness. Discontent is the fulcrum upon which the lever of thought has ever moved the world to action. A discontented working class! What glorious promise for the future! Ireland has to-day within her bosom two things that must make the blood run with riotous exultation in the veins of every lover of the Irish race—a discontented working-class and the nucleus of a rebellious womanhood. I cannot separate these two things in my mind; to me they are parts of the one great whole; different regiments of the one great army of progress . . . . . Every victory won by Labour for Labour helps to strengthen the bent back and enlarge the cramped soul of the labourer. Every time the labourer, be it man or woman, secures a triumph in the battle for juster conditions the mind of the labourer receives that impulse towards higher things that comes from the knowledge of power . . . On the whole it remains true that the fruits of the victories of the organized working-class are as capable of being stated in terms of spiritual uplifting as in the material terms of cash."

Such was the faith in which Connolly fought the hard battles of those times. It was not all battling, however; he could bring calm counsel and diplomacy into play when they were needed,

as was shown in his treatment of the Wexford crisis. The strike of workers in the Pierce and other foundries in Wexford, arising out of the employers' refusal to recognise the Transport and General Workers' Union, was the beginning of a bitter struggle in 1911—12. P. T. Daly, a vigorous personality, and almost the only prominent Sinn Fein pioneer who was equally active in the Labour movement, had been in charge, and had done strenuous work, until his arrest and imprisonment in January, 1912, for "inciting to riot." There had been scenes of tumult, and there was utter deadlock when Connolly was sent down. He brought about a settlement early in February, after the struggle had lasted just half-a-year. He proved an able negotiator. He made concessions to the employers, but was able to declare the end a drawn battle, and that the workers went back with erect heads and high hearts. He secured recognition for an Irish Foundry Workers' Union, reinstatement of all the men, the married men immediately, the majority of the others within ten days, all within a month. In return he agreed to the dissolution of the local branch of the Transport Union, but the new Foundry Workers' Union could affiliate with any organization it liked, including the hated "Larkinite" Union! The difference between a local branch of the Transport Union and a local Foundry Workers' Union affiliated to the Transport Union does not seem very striking, but it soothed the feelings of

the masters. Even industrial wars have their delicate little ironies.

In May of that same year, 1912, Connolly had his first experience of an Irish Trades Union Congress: it was held in Clonmel. His first speech was a short and vigorous proposal in favour of the independent representation of Labour upon all public boards. He was strongly supported by Larkin, William O'Brien, D. R. Campbell, and others. The Congress decided by a large majority on the formation of a Labour Party, and thus began the new line of activity which assumed so much importance a few years later.

Connolly made an incursion into the municipal electoral arena in January, 1913, contesting Dock Ward, Belfast, and polling 900 votes. In those days, too, with all the claims of the workers' struggle in Ulster, where he helped not a few noted minds to a new vision of Ireland, he was able to give energy to the Suffragist activities. He met "Æ" for the first time in 1913. They were to play different and commanding parts in the memorable struggle of that year. Very dissimilar had been their routes into the labour arena, but there was kinship in their ultimate vision.

Chapter XVI.

THE STRUGGLE OF 1913.

The principal Dublin employers combined in 1913 to destroy the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union and to crush Larkin, Connolly, and their militant colleagues. They came to a common conclusion as to the formidable menace to the industrial order, as they understood it and desired it to remain, which the new Union and the new leaders constituted. They were quite correct from their point of view. Larkin and Connolly *were* a danger to the socially selfish and spiritually stagnant society in which the Irish employing parties lived and moved and had their being. They wanted as a beginning to curtail profits, and eventually to abolish them; or, as capitalist moralists would express it, to "plunder" the "princes of business." The theory of toilers being on the same human plane as employers, the conception of industrial unionism, the vision of a co-operative commonwealth, were much farther from the imagination of the masters and their friends than was the picture of independent peasant proprietors from the minds of Irish landlords when an "unknown strolling man" began operations in Mayo over thirty years earlier. The masters, like the landlords, professed to be aghast at the methods employed, and probably were: the methods were

sometimes unlovely, like the system. In each case, however, the greater objection was to the ends in view.

The struggle that ensued in 1913, in consequence of the employers' league and decision, was stormy, heroic, and, through no fault of the Irish workers, indecisive—at any rate on the questions avowedly at issue. For the workers it had precious permanent results. It brought into play unexpected power, splendid traits and capacities in the humblest toilers; it brought skilled artizans and craftsmen, long aloof, to their side; it brought the best in intellectual Ireland to realise the shame of their conditions and the worth of their humanity. Labour at its close, to those who thought amongst the more favoured classes, was no longer an obscure, unregarded slave element; it was a part of the "household," and there was searching of heart, there was fraternal resolve as to its treatment and its future. Nothing in all the previous hundred years was so definite in the psychological effect for Labour as this desperate and, in some measure, this drawn battle.

Various employers had been planning the overthrow of Larkin since 1911, when the Transport Union had already given earnest of its power to obstruct profiteering. A salient part of the scheme was the introduction, on a bold scale, of strike-breakers, so-called "free" labourers, from Britain. Lord Aberdeen, the Lord Lieutenant, deeming the tactics of the masters rather crude, as well as dangerous, intervened at the time, called Larkin

to confer with him, and heard straight talk about the pitiful community of the quays, the grossly underpaid women, and the toilers generally. He initiated a conference of employers and employed, at which there was a proposal for a Conciliation Board. All conciliation boards take the capitalist system and profiteering for granted, and some of the employers were willing to try the experiment, but the scheme got no further, while the Union went ahead, as we have seen.

In January, 1913, quay porters at the North Wall came out in protest against non-union foremen as well as for better pay and less hours of working. Several other shipping firms came into the battle on the side of the Dublin Steam Packet Company, but Larkin and his men stood strenuously by their demands, though to the poor porters and their families it all meant strain and suffering week in week out. It was evident, however, that there was a new spirit in this long-despised proletariat, and eventually the masters were compelled to come to terms. The men secured a substantial share of their claim, and the moral effect of their victory was felt by many other workers. The "least" of the toilers began to hold their heads high, and all to grow unreasonable from the master's point of view. After the quay porters building workers and engineers gave them trouble: hurting their pride of power and profit.

Larkin's fighting methods and Connolly's doctrine of industrial control began to look more serious to the possessing classes. They were as

gravely concerned as the landlords had been when the farmers' leaders left the modest demand of the "Three F's" for the programme of "The Land for the People." But how to act was the problem. Some were much in advance of the majority. The most militant was William Martin Murphy. He decided that in his royal sphere he would be master of the common people. He would abolish the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union; he would utter the word and thereafter it would be a memory in his wide domain.

He called the *Irish Independent* despatch corps before him and declared his imperial will. If they elected to belong to the union run by the man-from-God-knows-where called Jim Larkin they would know the service of William Martin Murphy no more. There it was, a sheer issue between a new William and a new James. And the upshot of it was that they declared for James. The spirited folk showed William Martin Murphy that the prospect of unemployment and hunger was not enough to deter them from belonging to the Irish trade union of their choice. William thereafter summoned the tramway-men to his presence, but this time he was not altogether so imperial in his commands. However, he warned propagandists out of his tramway world. Those who introduced the doctrines and ways of the dreaded union would be dismissed straight away. There *were* dismissals at a later stage, with consequent unrest and action amongst the men. Meanwhile the *Independent* trouble had led to hostilities in other quarters,

notably in the case of the multiple newsagents, Easons, whose parcels, containing the militant employer's journal, workers averse from "tainted goods," objected to handle. Tram men, sore over dismissals of comrades, struck work in Horse Show week in August, to the indignation of snobs and pleasure-hunters, who thought it positively scandalous on the part of the "lower classes" to interfere with the distractions of the rich. It was a feverish time amongst the wealthy and socially insensitive, and the ill-feeling spread to their servants the police. Larkin condemned the rough and bullying tactics of the latter (speaking at a great meeting in Beresford Place) and declared that the workers did not mean to take brutality patiently. They would arm themselves for their own protection. He made some pointed allusions to Carsonian expedients in the north-east of Ulster. The Dublin Castle authorities, who had given the Carsonites their way, interfered promptly in the deepening struggle between the masters and the under-men, taking, as ever, the side of the former—Connolly said later that the employers "obtained beforehand [before they precipitated the struggle] the promise of swift and relentless use of government forces." Larkin was arrested, with four of his chief associates: William O'Brien, William Partridge, P. T. Daly, and Thomas Lawlor. They were returned for trial, but admitted to bail, all the time the excitement growing apace. A meeting announced for the next Sunday in O'Connell Street was "proclaimed" by the

government, but the workers had grown grimly determined that their voice and case should be heard. Their spirit received strident expression at the monster meeting which welcomed Larkin and his associates after their release from the police-court. Intense as it was, the spirit of the meeting was orderly, but this did not prevent violent baton-charges by the police at the close. On the Saturday afternoon there was further clash at Ringsend, where workers resented the presence of " scabs " in a football team, thereby bringing themselves under the ban of the offended police. In the charges that followed the police met fierce resistance. Later in the evening in Brunswick Street, where " loyal " tram-men provoked popular feeling, there was another encounter, in which the batoning police were again hard pressed. After nightfall, in the neighbourhood of Liberty Hall, a great popular rallying centre, their temper and tactics were still more boldly resented and resisted. Again and again the people threw themselves against the baton-men, and bore them back, for which defensive temerity they were described as " howling rabble" and other graceful things, by writers in the capitalist press. James Nolan, a bright and promising Dublin worker, was a victim of the police onslaught, dying early on Sunday morning. His fate caused a thrill of pity and passion in all his class.

The general public was in doubt that the proclaimed meeting would be attempted in O'Connell Street on the Sunday. Great forces of police,

including Royal Irish Constabulary from the country, were at hand and in readiness, with military in the background. Larkin had not been to the fore on Saturday. Sight-seers and strollers came into the popular parading place, as usual on the early afternoon of the Sabbath. Suddenly, sensation broke the mingled expectancy and enjoyment. At the moment announced for the meeting, Larkin, who had disguised himself, began to address the people from a window of the first floor of the Imperial Hotel, one of the establishments in which William Martin Murphy was interested. He was quickly arrested, and scarcely had those in the vicinity recovered from the first feeling of surprise when the long lines of police down the great thoroughfare fell upon the workers and sight-seers, men, women, and children, and in a series of savage charges and batoning indulged their fury relentlessly. It was an exhibition of unbridled ferocity, painful details of which were given by eye-witnesses at the ensuing meeting of the Dublin Corporation as well as through the press and otherwise by an English Liberal M.P., Mr. Handel Booth, who had a full view of the outburst of police delirium. The police had not matters their own way in other quarters, then or afterwards, Larkin's escort being a centre of storm, and the bridewell, to which he was taken, being menaced by an angry crowd; while on the Inchicore tram line " loyal" drivers had to receive not only police but military protection. However, it

was the wild scene in O'Connell Street, the indiscriminate savagery towards men, women, and children, that burned into the mind of those who saw, or heard the details of, the atrocity. And the details went far and wide.

Exciting as were those events they were only the prelude to the real struggle. Already the employers had taken steps towards the formation of an alliance which they believed would smash the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union and divide the members into ineffective groups or units again—the linking-up and harmonising of so many different orders and grades, all ready to help one another, had been a prime cause of offence. After the batoning in O'Connell Street the coal merchants decided to lock out all employés who belonged to the offending body. A day or two later 404 employers, the business potentates of the metropolis, "bound themselves by solemn vows, and by still more binding financial pledges" (in Connolly's words), that they would not employ thenceforward any worker who did not sign an undertaking that he or she would neither belong to nor help the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. Not only did they attack the Union itself, they challenged all unions and all workers. The clearing out was to begin after three days. It was well understood of course that the outrageous edict would be sturdily resisted, and that the attempt to enforce it would mean the starvation and agony of a host of women

and children. The employers on their own admission were entirely alive to the bearing of the hunger-factor in the contest.

Meanwhile it happened that the British Trade Congress had assembled at the beginning of September in Manchester for its annual meeting, and Dublin leaders, after the battue in O'Connell Street, decided to send over a delegation to let English and Scottish workers know that the Dublin Castle authorities, for whom as British voters they were to some extent responsible, were using their power to the full to assist the employers in their evil work. Thomas MacPartlin, the President of the Dublin Trades Council that year, William Partridge, and Thomas Lawlor, were the delegates. The Congress, having heard the facts at first hand, condemned the action of the Castle, urged all the affiliated unions to support the Dublin toilers in their struggle, and took upon itself the responsibility of providing food for those affected, no matter how long the fight might last. In its turn it sent a delegation across the Irish Sea. At home in Dublin the funeral of James Nolan was an extraordinarily impressive and affecting sight; and while still the people brooded over it the collapse, one evening, of slum tenements in Church Street, with grievous loss of life, showed another tragic side of the toilers' lot in the capital of Ireland.

The delegation from the British Trade Union Congress included some amiable and optimistic men —the veteran Keir Hardie was a visitor at the same

time—and the body got into communication with the Dublin masters. In two sittings at the Shelbourne Hotel, at the second of which representatives from the Dublin Trades Council were present, the Britons tried to show the employers to the fore that the proposal to stamp out trade unionism in the twentieth century was unworkable. The masters professed that they were not averse from trade unionism of the old and respectable kind, but they had decided that the brand invented by Larkin must go. It was felt that a settlement was possible on general issues, and on the one contested question of dictation to the workers over the union to which they should or should not belong reflection might do something, so the conference adjourned. The masters proceeded left and right to carry out the attack upon the Transport Unionists, and incidentally on other unionists who would not declare against it. Workers were locked out on all sides, and then the masters informed the British trade unionists that no good purpose would be served by their coming to the adjourned conference. The delegates wrote to express their astonishment at the "serious, wilful, and indefensible breach of a common understanding." But the masters did not mind. They took no account of the sensibilities of workers, and they were not anxious about meals and the morrow. They had locked out the wage-slaves who would not forswear the Transport Union, and they awaited developments.

Some were unexpected and disconcerting.

Transporters were firm, and workers of other unions proceeded to make common cause with them. The builders' labourers, who the masters understood were unfriendly to "Larkinism," stood out promptly against the ban, while skilled artisans in their turn showed plainly that they had come to take the doctrine of solidarity seriously and would put it into practice. The women and girls were splendid from the start. For the sake of principle they lost the poor posts that had stood between them and starvation, and went out with defiance and resolution in their hearts. The general labourers spurned the masters' ultimatum, and went forth to tramp the streets and swell the crowds of the dismissed and unemployed. The industrial dislocation that followed the pressing of the masters' mandate was unprecedented. Thousands of humble homes, and many that had been comfortable, were faced with ruin, but a rare coherence and a fine courage marked the hosts who were thrown on the defensive—thirty-seven unions altogether were brought into the fight. The employers had the police and the "judicial" class at their service. "They were able to override the law," as Connolly wrote, "and to fill the prisons with old and young, men and women, boys and girls, who attempted to exercise the picketing rights guaranteed to them by English law." There was a reign of terror as well as the shadow of starvation. (A whitewashing police inquiry by a couple of lawyers later on was treated with derision by the workers.) Withal it was plain

and palpable that Labour in Dublin had suffered a spiritual revolution. Larkin was under lock and key, but there were leaders to the fore who were worthy of the heroic men and women they led; and incidentally they set the pace to the official Britons at a rate the latter found embarrassing. Connolly, who had been arrested and released after a hunger-strike, was a tower of strength in public and in private: in his addresses abroad, in his campaign directions, in his tactics in council. The spirit of the men, women, and children in the dismal deeps of Dublin seemed to kindle his heart and give fire and inspiration to his utterances. The incoming of men and women, more socially favoured, to help in any and every fashion, from street-corner speaking to cooking and serving in Liberty Hall and elsewhere, was a new feature in labour struggles in the capital. Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, his wife, and the Countess Markievicz were three out of many who threw themselves heart and soul into the work of feeding the spirits and the bodies of the locked-out wage-slaves and their families.

Larkin was released on bail, and went over to England to spread in his unsparing way the facts of the Dublin issue, and incidentally to hurt the pride of some official-minded trade union leaders of Britain, with whose methods he and other human-hearted people had little patience. Thousands of the rank and file in Britain were intense in their sympathy with the Dublin workers: the *Daily Herald* of those days is an eloquent index

of the fact, and Connolly said afterwards that the spirit of the working folk on both sides of the Irish Sea in those early stages showed the highest point of moral grandeur yet reached by the Labour movement. Sympathetic strikes took place amongst the rail-men in Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham; they were stopped by officialdom, but there were other indications of fraternal revolt to follow. The Trades Union Congress delegates to Ireland issued their report, declaring that the Dublin employers were "determined to crush out trade unionism." This stirred the rank and file anew, and it began to seem that direct action on a wider scale than that of the rail-men would be the outcome. British capitalists met and came to the assistance of their kind in Dublin. Emboldened, the latter refused the request of the Lord Mayor to meet Labour leaders in conference; they proved no more amenable to Professor Kettle and the Dublin Industrial Peace Committee. The British Government, whose forces in the Irish capital were doing the work of the capitalists all the time, sent over a commission with Sir George Askwith at its head. More and more workers came out or were locked out week by week, and the problem of feeding the hungry, even though food-ships—a dramatic feature of the situation—began to come in from Britain, became more and more serious. Amongst the most faithful of subscribers from the ranks of Irish toil were Orangemen. The commission gave T. M. Healy, as leading counsel for the employers, an oppor-

tunity of denouncing in "Larkinism" what in his younger days he had applauded in farmers who struggled to bring landlords to reason. One intense feature of the inquiry was an address of Larkin's in which he dealt in scathing and impassioned terms with the social degradation and shame of Dublin. The commissioners in their report, which appeared with unexpected promptitude, showed an effort to be placid and judicial. They declared, however, with decision, that the document in which workers were asked to forswear the Transport and General Workers' Union "imposes on the signatories conditions which are contrary to individual liberty, and which no workman or body of workmen could reasonably be expected to accept." They suggested a conciliation court. But the masters, trusting in their united might and the power of the hunger factor soon or late, remained as obdurate as ever, treating censure and suggestion with equal indifference.

At this stage "Æ" addressed to them the memorable letter which is sure to be the most enduring document of the struggle, the one thing through which those masters of Dublin, so proud and cruel in their little day, will live in history:

". . . . You determined deliberately, in cold anger, to starve out one-third of the population of this city, to break the manhood of the men by the sight of the suffering of their wives and the hunger of their children. We read in the Dark Ages of the rack and thumbscrew. But these iniquities were hidden and concealed from the

knowledge of men in dungeons and torture-chambers. Even in the Dark Ages humanity could not endure the sight of such suffering, and it learnt of such misuse of power by slow degrees, through rumour, and when it was certain it razed the Bastilles to their foundations. It remained for the twentieth century and the capital city of Ireland to see an oligarchy of four hundred masters deciding openly upon starving one hundred thousand people, and refusing to consider any solution except that fixed by their pride. You, masters, asked men to do that which masters of labour in any other city in these islands had not dared to do. You insolently demanded of those men who were members of a trade union that they should resign from that union; and from those who were not members you insisted on a vow that they would never join it.

"Your insolence and ignorance of the rights conceded to workers universally in the modern world were incredible, and as great as your inhumanity. If you had between you collectively a portion of human soul as large as a threepenny bit, you would have sat night and day with the representatives of labour, trying this or that solution of the trouble, mindful of the women and children, who at least were innocent of wrong against you. But no! You reminded Labour you could always have your three square meals a day while it went hungry. You went into conference again with representatives of the State, because, dull as you are, you knew public opinion

would not stand your holding out. You chose as your spokesman the bitterest tongue that ever wagged in this island, and then when an award was made by men who have an experience in industrial matters a thousand times transcending yours, who have settled disputes in industries so great that the sum of your petty enterprises would not equal them, you withdraw again, and will not agree to accept their solution, and fall back again on your devilish policy of starvation. Cry aloud to Heaven for new souls! The souls you have got, cast upon the screen of publicity, appear like the horrid and writhing creatures enlarged from the insect world, and revealed to us by the cinematograph. . . . . ."

A little later, a sympathetic lady, Mrs. Dora B. Montefiore, who was blissfully unconscious of Irish clerical susceptibilities, set in train a scheme to take many of the workers' children out of the hunger zone, and to leave some for a time in friendly homes in Britain, homes of Catholics as far as possible (more were to be sent to ultramontane Catholic homes in Belfast). The "danger to faith and morals" roused ecclesiastics, and the passionate but innocent hearts they could influence, to a stormy crusade to retain the little ones in the pious environment of Dublin slumdom. Archbishop Walsh, with a grim candour, put the matter in a different light when he said that taking away the children to comfortable quarters for a while would make them discontented afterwards with their poor homes in Dublin! The onsets

to " save the children" brought a frenzied interlude, yet a wildly unreal one, in those days of battle between tyranny and principle. Here again " Æ's" review will be classic. It is part of his address at the Albert Hall, London, on November 1st, 1913, when Connolly also spoke from the heart to a vast gathering of working Britons (and not a few Irish) presided over by George Lansbury:

" We no longer know people [in Dublin] by the old signs and the old shams. People are to us either human or sub-human. They are either on the side of those who are fighting for human conditions in labour or they are with those who are trying to degrade it and thrust it into the abyss.

" Ah! but I forgot; there has sprung up a third party, who are super-human beings, they have so little concern for the body at all that they assert it is better for children to be starved than to be moved from the Christian atmosphere of the Dublin slums. Dublin is the most Christian city in these islands. Its tottering tenements are holy. The spiritual atmosphere which pervades them is ample compensation for the diseases which are there and the food which is not there. If any poor parents think otherwise, and would send their children for a little from that earthly paradise, they will find the docks and railway stations barred by these superhuman beings and by the police, and they are pitched headlong out of the station, set upon and beaten, and their children snatched

from them. A Dublin labourer has no rights in his own children. You see if these children were even for a little out of the slums they would get discontented with their poor homes, so a very holy man has said. Once getting full meals they might be so inconsiderate as to ask for them all their lives. They might destroy the interesting experiments carried on in Dublin for generations to find out how closely human beings can be packed together, on how little a human being can live, and what is the minimum wage his employer need pay him. James Larkin interrupted these interesting experiments towards the evolution of the under-man and he is in gaol."

Larkin's trial, begun on the 27th of October, had ended, after the class-lawyers had expressed their sense of his iniquity, in a sentence of seven months' imprisonment. But working British voters had grown not merely restive but wrathful, and a couple of electoral knocks for the government led to the hasty opening of the prison doors on the 13th of November. Larkin went to Britain with his " Fiery Cross," and the Dublin masters, failing to bring the under-men to their feet by starvation, began to import British "scab" labour. Whereupon the dock labourers in the port of Dublin came out. The police, who all the time had been violently partial, sometimes ferocious, were becoming unbearable. Captain White, who was active throughout, suggested the arming of the workers. Connolly developed the idea and started the Citizen Army.

Archbishop Walsh made a plea for a conference. The masters could not well ignore the archbishop. The conference met and failed, the masters being determined to retain the "free"-slave labour they had secured. All those terrible days the golden fact was the grit and endurance of the often hungry toilers and their ill-clad folk in the bleak homes in winter-swept Dublin.

The pressure of the rank and file in many quarters of Britain grew embarrassing to the official leaders. A general strike in sympathy, a "blockade" of Dublin to bring the masters to reason, were urged by the more militant spirits. Those who knew the official trade union leaders were certain that in the last resort they would "trim" and fail, on one pretext or another. As it happened, at the special Trade Union Congress which they were obliged to call in London, one that was largely made up of the obedient official element of their own stamp, they secured a huge majority—on the misleading "card" vote system—against the drastic action of a "blockade" of Dublin, though they still gave lip-support to the fighters. Larkin ruffled their feelings, as he often did before, and they roundly abused him. Connolly, in one of his finest speeches, brought them back to realities and principles. But they did nothing beyond preparing for another conference with the Dublin autocrats, who feared direct action but did not object to talking while those locked-out and on strike went hungry. Their delegates met those of the trade unionists, but refused to

unbend, especially over the retention of their "free" slaves.

It would be a grave injustice to overlook or minimise the spirit of the best of the British rank and file in the whole battle, or to fail to emphasise the whole-hearted efforts of independent leaders and pioneers, of whom George Lansbury is the most popular example. *They* responded to the ideas that dominated the under-men of Dublin and their champions. The officials at the best never thought in anything higher than bread-stuff.

The struggle lasted eight long months, in some quarters more, and ended indecisively. A couple of unions went back on their brethren in the end —the variety of unions and plans did not make the battle easier. Larkin dwelt forcibly on this aspect of things, and the need of the One Big Union, in his slashing address as President of the Irish Trades Union Congress in Dublin in the summer of 1914. The masters had not prevailed against them, although, he said, they had to retreat to their base. On the central and original issue the employers were unsuccessful on the whole, though some workers for tactical reasons signed the obnoxious document, and awaited events. The masters, while refusing to recognise the Union, were obliged to tolerate the individual unionists who remained loyal to it both in the spirit and the letter; they could not get on conveniently without them. Even those autocrats of Dublin had discovered that a frontal attack on

trade unionism was vanity; it conduced to the solidarity they dreaded. They held out, however, for the power to employ "free" labour also, and could not be compelled for the nonce to give preference to organized workers. It rested with the unions to go on more zealously with the organizing of the "free" who were not free. In the ensuing couple of years those who stood loyally by the Transport Union were able to secure appreciable increases of wages. Connolly thus summed up the result (*Irish Worker*, November 28, 1914):

"The battle was a drawn battle. The employers, despite their Napoleonic plan of campaign, and their more than Napoleonic ruthlessness and unscrupulous use of foul means, were unable to carry on their business without men and women who remained loyal to their unions. The workers were unable to force the employers to a formal recognition of the Union, and to give preference to organised Labour.

"From the effects of this drawn battle both sides are still bearing heavy scars. How deep those scars are none will ever reveal."

How deeply he felt the spiritual grandeur and gain of the struggle is shown in another passage of the same article:

"When that story is written [the whole epic story of 1913] by a Man or Woman with honesty in their hearts, and with a sympathetic insight into the travail of the poor, it will be a record of which Ireland may well be proud. It will tell of how the old women and young girls, long crushed

and enslaved, dared to risk all, even life itself, in the struggle to make life more tolerable, more free of the grinding tyranny of the soulless Dublin employers. It will tell of how, like an inspiration, there came to those Irish women and girls the thought that no free nation could be reared which tolerated the enslavement of its daughters to the worst forms of wage-slavery, and how in the glow of that inspiration they arose from their seats in the workshop or factory, and went out to suffer and struggle along with their men. It will tell of how the general labourers, the men upon whose crushed lives are built the fair fabric of civilization, from whose squalid tenements the sweet-smelling flowers of capitalist culture derive their aroma, by whose horny hands and mangled bodies are brought the ease and safety of a class that hates and despises them, by whose ignorance their masters purchase their knowledge—it will tell how these labourers dared to straighten their bent backs, and looking in the faces of their rulers and employers, dared to express the will to be free. And it will tell how that spectacle of the slave of the underworld looking his masters in the face without terror, and fearlessly proclaiming the kinship and unity of all with each and each with all, how that spectacle caught the imagination of all unselfish souls so that the skilled artisan took his place also in the place of conflict and danger, and the men and women of genius, the artistic and the literati, hastened to honour and serve

those humble workers whom all had hitherto despised and scorned."

In many cases the feeling was not the positive, poisonous one of scorn. It was often one of frigid indifference; often, also, there was the shallow sense that the under-workers were merely animals in crude human form, born for coarse and muddy toil, for things as low as their own (supposed) personalities. That they had any fineness of nature, that their employments were essential social services which could be and ought to be beautified: such things were unthinkable when the struggle of 1913 began. That struggle against the powers of cash and arrogance, class-law based on sophistry and brutality, ecclesiastical pessimism worlds removed from the Christian vision of human divinity and brotherhood, a lying press, and a parasitical "society," was a grand moral and spiritual exhibition on the part of Poverty in revolt, Poverty finding its soul; and its challenge and its message went wide and deep. In "Æ" is one striking example of the fire it struck in responsive spirits; in Pearse, brought up with a shock from his ideal mental home among the lowly Gaels of Connacht to the terrible yet beautiful realism at his door in Dublin, we have another; and there were many, many more: like W. B. Yeats, who wrote with passion of the quasi-religious fanaticism that in the "Save-the-Children" (!) frenzy was a factor in support of the oppressors of the poor; like James Stephens

with his scathing reminder to clerics and other powers of how backward in culture, art, and true living was the Ireland they dominated; like those sensitive artists and rare individualities, Thomas MacDonagh and Joseph Plunkett (who incidentally gave prominence in the *Irish Review* to Connolly's defence of the cause of his brethren in the battle). In sooth the struggle brought more than will ever be told towards the chastening and intensifying of Irish hearts and minds in the crucial, unique years that were at hand.

Chapter XVII.

THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE.

An article written by Connolly for the democratic organ *Forward*, of Glasgow, in the last week of July, 1914, and printed in its issue of August 1, and another from his pen in the same organ a fortnight later, showed his sensitive spirit aflame, the first over Irish tragedy, the second over world tragedy. The fate and future of the toiling people were in each case his moving thought; but destiny had woven some terrible threads of its fabric in the meantime. The first article was an outcome of "The Latest Massacre in Dublin": at Bachelor's Walk after the gun-running at Howth on the last Sunday in July. The Dublin workers had shown in the near past, he said, that they were not willing slaves, political or social, and that not even the necessities of the struggle for political freedom could make them abandon their individual liberties or weaken their fearless democracy. Hence it was realised that their concept of an armed people, inspired by democratic ideas and stirred by social unrest, was a menace to the class rule for which governments exist. Hence the attempt to disarm the Volunteers of Dublin, and hence the fresh massacre of Dublin citizens.

"Magnificent Dublin! As you emerged with spirit unbroken and heart undaunted from your

industrial tribulation, so you will arise mightier and more united from the midst of the military holocaust in which the government of all the treacheries meets your plans for political freedom."

In the article of August 15, "A Continental Revolution," the burden was the European horror, and still more the socialist tragedy. Like other Irish workers Connolly had to make the sad confession that the war had found the movement helpless. No insurrection of the working-classes, no general strike, could entail, he declared, a greater slaughter of socialists than would their participation as soldiers in the armies of their respective countries. If they must die had they not better die in their own lands, fighting for the freedom of their class and the abolition of war, than go forth to strange countries and die slaughtering and slaughtered by their brothers that tyrants and profiteers might live? Any action that would stop the colossal crime would be justified, and he hoped for the paralysing of the internal transport service on the Continent even should the act of paralysing it necessitate the erection of Socialist barricades. Even an unsuccessful attempt at social revolution by force of arms, following the paralysis of the economic life of militarism, would be less disastrous to the socialist cause than the act of socialists allowing themselves to be used in the slaughter of their brothers.

"I make no war on patriotism, never have done. But against the patriotism of capitalism—the

patriotism which makes the interest of capitalism the supreme test of right and duty—I place the patriotism of the working class, the patriotism which judges every public act by its effect on the fortunes of those who toil. That which is good for the working-class I esteem patriotic . . . I regard each nation as the possessor of a definite contribution to the common stock of civilization, and I regard the capitalist class of each nation as being the logical and natural enemy of the national culture which constitutes that definite contribution. Therefore the stronger I am in my affection for national tradition, literature, language, and sympathies, the more firmly rooted am I in my opposition to that capitalist class which in its soulless lust for power and gold would bronze the nations as in a mortar."

His attitude to war for subject nation or class was stated with frankness and force in a further article in *Forward* the following week:

"The war of a subject nation for independence, for its right to live its own life in its own way, may and can be justified as holy and righteous; the war of a subject class to free itself from the debasing conditions of economic and political slavery should at all times choose its own weapons and esteem all as sacred instruments of righteousness: but the war of nation against nation in the interest of royal freebooters and cosmopolitan brigands is a thing accursed."

The man who held these intense convictions in regard to Labour, nationality, capitalism, im-

perialism and war, became in every sense the leader of the Irish workers at an early stage of the world-tragedy, on Larkin's departure for America (he was not allowed to return while the war lasted in Europe). It was a situation that well might try the strongest soul; and Connolly himself, while he never flinched or doubted, realised that it was desperate, and that he, if not his hopes, might perish in the crisis. He knew the harsh pressure of material conditions that the war brought Irish workers; he saw men of his own union marching away to that war: some because of Belgium; some as reservists; others forced to go because of what was really industrial conscription in effect. He thought for the nation as a whole as well as the toilers, and for a time he found little that was hopeful, much that was menacing and deplorable. John Redmond's imperialism, "Ireland pledged to the war," few signs of any popular protest, a nation that had lost its bearings: such were facts, positive and negative, that he had to face. He bent his energy to inciting Labour and national forces to militant action. He was determined upon eventual revolt, and said so repeatedly. When asked to define his policy he answered, as noted in chapter 12, that in times of war we should act as in war.

He said in the *Irish Worker* that there were two honourable and practical courses for the Irish people—whose own freedom had been destroyed, and who were not consulted about the war. If the workers of Europe rose against the war

Irish workers should help them. If a German army landed in Ireland, and offered guarantees to establish Irish independence, the Irish people should support that army. But he was critical of German intentions in regard to Ireland. "The Germans are as bad as the English. Let us do the job ourselves," he said privately. (He meant the German militarists—he admired the German workers.) In the same article in the *Irish Worker* he tried to prepare the people for revolutionary action within Ireland in order to hold the food and save the country from artificial famine—this was an immediate duty, pending either of the forementioned consummations. Ireland could feed herself under sane conditions, but new circumstances in England would mean the straining of every nerve to take food across to feed her army and navy and Jingoes; famine prices would rule in Ireland, followed by the Great Hunger itself. The struggle to hold the food might mean more than a transport strike, it might mean armed battling in the streets; but they must not shrink from the consequences.

"Starting thus Ireland may yet set the torch to a European conflagration that will not burn out until the last throne and the last capitalist bond and debenture are shrivelled on the funeral pyre of the last war-lord."

In further writings he drew a parallel between the situation then and the situation on the eve of the calamity of the Forties. The hosts who died so tamely in '47—8 were given no chance of

dying for something worth while. Had Mitchel's insurrectionary policy carried the day who could deny that theirs would be a better Ireland? Once again, in a similar situation, the old fatal policy of waiting was being pursued while the government seized leaders: the golden hour of anger was allowed to pass; and Ireland was threatened with a famine and a blood-tax.

Leading the sorely-tried toilers, helping the cause of the women and the hungry school children, editing the *Irish Worker*—which was suppressed in 1915, to be followed by the *Workers' Republic* — attending to Citizen Army affairs, meeting the buffets of government and police, Connolly's heart was afire but his brain was cool and clear. Nothing turned him away from the crucial ultimate issue for the nation. In Volunteer quarters his determination to ensure insurrection led to doubt and suspicion for a long time; those Volunteers had identified Connolly with industrial affairs alone and knew little or nothing of his national philosophy. Eyes and understanding ought to have been opened by the declaration in his article "Why the Citizen Army Honours Rossa" in the striking memorial volume issued when the old Fenian's body was brought to rest in Glasnevin:

"The Irish Citizen Army in its constitution pledges its members to fight for a Republican Freedom for Ireland. Its members are, therefore, of the number who believe that at the call of duty they may have to lay down their lives for Ireland,

and have so trained themselves that at the worst the laying down of their lives shall constitute the starting point of another glorious tradition—a tradition that will keep alive the soul of the nation." *

This faith and philosophy of sacrifice make us think of Pearse, just as part of the final fabric of Pearse's own philosophy sets us thinking of Connolly. These two dominant individualities who influenced each other and the course of Irish history met for the first time early in 1914, though of course they had known each other's work for years. Connolly before going to the United States had expressed his sense of the high promise of Pearse, then a young man of twenty-three. Pearse had been deeply impressed by a speech of Connolly's in favour of woman's suffrage in a Dublin debate, and like everybody else with imagination and heart he had been profoundly moved by the sufferings and the grit of the workers in 1913 when Connolly was the embodiment of the militancy and thought of Labour. However, the intimate knowledge of each other did not come until happenings that arose out of the European War threw them together. Revolutionaries from different standpoints—though both desired from the first that Gaelic ideas should dominate a free

* A three-act Fenian play of Connolly's, "Under Which Flag?" was produced by the Workers' Dramatic Company in Liberty Hall just a month before the Rising. Seán Connolly played a leading part. A tribute to play and players, by Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, appeared in *The Workers' Republic*.

Ireland—they came closer and closer to unity in the two following fateful years.

The struggle of the workers and the women for justice and freedom had kindled the intense sympathy of Pearse, though he thought all the time of the Irish nation as a whole. He was among the first of the Volunteer leaders who declared that the new body should never be used against a Labour movement. He kept Larkin's son at Sgoil Eanna despite that kind of criticism which is one of the mean sins that have crawled into parts of Ireland. The new social passion that stirred him from 1913 found vent in articles in the Republican organ *Irish Freedom*, and elsewhere. "Beware of the thing that is coming! Beware of the risen people!" he said at one stage. Before the end, in his real social testament, *The Sovereign People*, which has the fervour of a spiritual message, he all but adopted the essential social teaching of Connolly; or rather his own thought and evolution brought him to conclusions kindred to Lalor's and Connolly's. He who had so earnestly insisted on the spiritual fact of nationality, and on the necessity of physical freedom to maintain and preserve it, now demanded the complete control of the material as well as the moral resources of the nation by the nation and for the nation:

"The nation's sovereignty extends not only to all the men and women of the nation but to all the material possessions of the nation, the nation's soil and all its resources, all wealth and all

wealth-producing processes within the nation. In other words no private right to property is good as against the public right of the nation. But the nation is under a moral obligation so to exercise its public right as to secure strictly equal rights and liberties to every man and woman within the nation. The whole is entitled to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole, but this is to be pursued exactly for the end that each of the individuals composing the whole may enjoy happiness and prosperity, the maximum amount of happiness and prosperity consistent with the happiness and prosperity of all the rest . . . A nation may go further and determine that all sources of wealth whatsoever are the property of the nation, that each individual should give his service for the nation's good and should be adequately provided for by the nation, and that all surplus wealth should go to the national treasury to be expended on national purposes."

In that we have a typical piece of real Labour philosophy from a great worker in his own sphere. And in this passage he puts with poetry and passion the conviction that Connolly in his grim devoted way had followed all his active life:

"It is in fact true that the repositories of the Irish tradition, as well the spiritual tradition of nationality as the kindred tradition of stubborn physical resistance to England, have been the great, splendid, faithful common people—that dumb, multitudinous throng which sorrowed during the penal night, which bled in '98, which

starved in the Famine, and which is here still—what is left of it—unbought and unterrified. Let no man be mistaken as to who will be lord in Ireland when Ireland is free. The people will be lord and master. The people, who wept in Gethsemane, who trod the sorrowful way, who died naked on a cross, who went down to hell, who will rise again glorious and immortal, who will sit on the right hand of God, and will come in the end to give judgment, a judgment just and terrible."

When we think of what Irish Labour seeks, of what it plans and builds at its best and broadest, we see in *The Sovereign People* a vital part of the literature of the movement; we see that Pearse was Connolly's comrade in still more than the insurrection and sacrifice of Eastertide, 1916. They live as brother teachers of the social and mental gospel of the workers who advance, and of those who help them to advance, towards the sovereign and fraternal co-operative nation.

"We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies to be sovereign and indefeasible," said the Republican Proclamation of Easter, 1916. If this does not seem the whole national and social faith of Pearse and Connolly, it is the corner-stone of it. They had given us already their detailed and shining presentations of it. They were the Rising incarnate. Of all those who gave themselves up to the insurrection, of all who, like those two leaders themselves, made the ultimate sacrifice, there is

none whose spirit was not typified by either Pearse or Connolly. Who inclined more to the temperament and thought of Connolly and who to the temperament and spirit of Pearse it is vain to inquire. We could not be sure even in regard to the avowedly Labour combatants. Those who urge that the Rising had an "economic basis," in part, or that it was "a proletarian revolt," in some measure, as well as a national one, may have some show of fact or reason; but at the most it is only partial and incidental. The broad truth is that in such periods of crisis and deepening of destiny men's motives are complex; they do not wholly know why they act; they have subconscious reasons below the conscious and intellectual ones; their souls determine the course.

Connolly, the Marxian Socialist, the convinced industrial unionist, the devoted Labour leader, said to his daughter Nora on the eve of his execution: "The Socialists will never understand why I am here. They all forget I am an Irishman." Even so with brave and active spirits who had worked with him in one phase or another of the democratic movement in times of peace and who did as he did in the sterner day. For some it was the last earthly stage. Peadar O'Maicin, Richard O'Carroll, and Seán Connolly died in the fighting —the latter at the very beginning of the Rising, in the attack on Dublin Castle; like James Connolly himself, Michael Mallin, his second in command in the Citizen Army, was executed after the surrender to the British forces; Ernest Cavanagh

met his death on the steps of Liberty Hall on Easter Tuesday. All were distinctive individualities. Peadar O'Maicin, of the Painters' Society, and Vice-President of the Dublin Trades Council, was a zealous student and thinker as well as an ardent worker, a socialist, and a Gael of Gaels, his unpretending and gracious nature giving little hint of his strength of soul. Michael Mallin, silk-weaver, and in other days the Secretary of the Silk-weavers' Society, was one of the most heroic figures of the insurrection, in charge at the College of Surgeons, where his second in command was the Countess Markievicz, who had fought so staunchly for the workers in a different way in 1913. Ernest Cavanagh was glad to serve and stir them through his pictures, even as his sister, Maeve Cavanagh, through her songs. Richard O'Carroll had a high civic spirit. "He loved his city and his country," said Thomas Johnson in his presidential address to the Irish Trade Union Congress in the August after the Rising. "He took pride in his public work, in his work for his union and his class, and it was the intensity of his conviction, the enthusiasm of his nature that led him (impulsively, without premeditation, as I have been told) to throw in his lot with the insurgents." William Partridge —born in Sligo, and trained as an engineer—who had played a bold and resolute part in municipal life and the Labour movement for a number of years, as strong as the best in the drama of 1913, succumbed after his release from penal servitude

in 1917. He had fought at the College of Surgeons under Mallin, who in his last letter to his wife paid a touching tribute to him.

The passing of these trusted men, with comrades of the rank and file, was a grievous loss to Irish Labour. As with the general body of the insurgents so with the element from the ranks of toil: comparatively few in numbers—the Citizen Army mustered 118 rifles—they were the most individual of their class and day, the types of men who were ready to make the supreme sacrifice. With them may be associated Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, whose murder was one of the most cruel tragedies of Eastertide, 1916. That champion of so many good causes was heart and soul with Labour, in its ideals, its activities, and its crises, above all in 1913. But his faith, even in days of doubt for pacifist natures, was in passive resistance on a national scale, in mental and spiritual militancy, as he showed in a memorable letter to Thomas MacDonagh, whose gracious life was also to be sacrificed.

Other Labour men served long or short terms of imprisonment or internment after the insurrection: Thomas Foran, Cathal O'Shannon, P. T. Daly, William O'Brien, and Michael Mullen amongst them. James Joyce of the Citizen Army and Transport Union was sentenced to ten years' penal servitude. For a brief period the forces and fortunes of Labour seemed broken: the Transport Union in particular saw bleak and trying days. But the workers shared in the great

revival of spirit that was so soon to come. How much they had recovered and advanced was seen in the Irish Trade Union Congress in August. Thomas Johnson in the presidential address already mentioned, in which he paid tribute to the leaders and comrades who had gone, faced the immediate and the post-war problems of Ireland's workers, dwelling on the need of large schemes of productive work, the beneficent changes that could be brought about by the establishment of the co-operative system of farming, whether by colonies of small holders on the plan outlined by the departmental committee or by joint farming on a large scale by groups of men working in co-operation under an expert director appointed by themselves. He told the farmers that no more in farming than in other industry should private profit be allowed to interfere with national well-being. The status of farm-slave should give way to that of co-worker. He indicated the large propagandist scheme which had been planned in order to bring town and country folk into more strenuous and practical service towards the realisation of Labour's ideal of a free co-operative commonwealth. The address, the discussion, and the plans in the year of Connolly's death were in harmony with Connolly's spirit. Labour was bold in heart, national and international in sympathy, co-operative and creative in plan and purpose, as he had looked to it to be. And not only the Congress but many other signs went to

show, in those days and the days to follow, that Connolly's soul—glorious be its fortunes through higher planes and destinies!—was only in the beginning of its inspiration in the land for which he toiled and died.

Chapter XVIII.

TOWARDS THE COMMONWEALTH.

We might sum up the situation of Irish Labour in general during the European War by saying that it was harassed as a human entity but that it advanced very notably in organization and in the expression of its ideals, though not making so far the decisive headway with co-operative enterprises desired by its most thoughtful units and leaders. In Dublin and other cities and towns the workers were seriously affected by the restrictions on manufactures: restrictions in the matter of output, and limitation in the supply of essential materials. Thousands went over to British munition works or other unnatural sources of employment. Under the minimum wage regulations agricultural labourers (whose rally to trade unionism has been remarkable) fared better than before, but not to an appreciable extent, owing to the concurrent rise in food prices; their standard of living was not raised materially, though some still reactionary farmers thought they had more than justice (and agrarian profiteering) permitted. So the men on the land have agitated vigorously. For city toilers with the restrictions and limitations in industry, and the doubling of the cost of provisions, the position was often pitiful. The "War

for Freedom" added heavily to their habitual slavery under British and Irish capitalism. The pressure of material conditions had a deal to do, though by no means everything as a spirit of advance was abroad, with the striking increase in the trade unionist forces, not only amongst manual workers but amongst the primary school teachers, the clerks, and others who had been shy or disdainful of real combination before. Women workers, so grossly robbed and ill-treated as a rule under Irish capitalism, made forward moves, and won a little of their due—waitresses, for example—but nothing appreciable enough to lessen the general scandal of the state and lot of Irish women toilers north and south.

The Irish Transport and General Workers' Union made record progress — amongst land workers even more than amongst other brethren; by the autumn of 1918 it had some 70,000 members; in fact it had become by far the most powerful of Irish labour organizations. The hope was at times expressed that it would eventually realise James Connolly's ideal of the One Big Union for all: the workers of the several industries autonomous in their different spheres, and harmoniously effective for the general good and the main purposes. This hope may have been too rosy, but at all events the Union had taken an appreciable step towards the goal. It had penetrated into quarters of Ireland where trade unionism had never secured a footing before, and had gathered into its fold the most varied orders

of workers, in some cases those of every occupation in the district. All wage-earners, men and women, are eligible for membership, but skilled tradesmen must be also members of their own particular union where a branch exists in the neighbourhood. Through its scheme of autonomous sections or sub-branches (workers of kindred occupations) fraternally fitting into the general all-Ireland unity it ensures local individuality as well as general strength. In *Lines of Progress*, from the President, Thomas Foran, it is pointed out that in No. 1 Branch, Liberty Hall, Dublin, the parent branch of the Union, the system has long been practised with great success; by its means 8,000 members of every occupation do their business with ease and efficiency. The renovated Liberty Hall,* with Seumas O'hAodha and his staff, is indeed a significant centre of ordered activity and effectiveness. The fine work of Seumas, by the way, is little known to Irish Labour in general. Throughout the country, a number of organizers, some of them zealous Gaels, have helped the workers to a new sense of their strength and their due. A healthy fact is a certain measure of success in bringing small farmers as well as labourers into the organization. They are kindred in more senses than one; the social and historical connection of the two orders up to a point did not escape the notice of Karl Marx in *Das Kapital*.

* Organized by, and carried out under the direction of, James O'Neill.

As to the strength of trade unionism of all kinds in Ireland, the estimates have varied, but leaders set the number towards the close of 1918—a year of record rally and progress—at a quarter of a million. This included unaffiliated unionists as well as those affiliated to the Irish Trade Union Congress—the latter varied element including purely Irish unions, Irish bodies in "United Kingdom" federations, and Irish branches of British unions (affiliated of course on the Irish membership). Of the 40,000 unionists in the Belfast area—of whom engineers are necessarily a goodly proportion—some 20,000 are in affiliation with the Irish Trade Union Congress. The tendency of the newer unions, like those of the clerks, etc., is to be entirely Irish organizations, even as the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union.

An important step for Irish Labour was the founding towards the close of 1917 of a weekly organ of its own, *Irish Opinion*, called subsequently *The Voice of Labour*. It was edited in the early stages by Andrew E. Malone, a pioneer of industrial co-operation, whose articles on economics and social subjects have been amongst the most distinctive features of *New Ireland*. Later on the editorship was undertaken by Cathal O'Shannon, a young Gael of marked vitality and power, whose earlier activities, especially in Connolly's days in Ulster, we have noted. The paper from the outset has been a considerable asset of Labour's, not only as a chronicle of struggle and

achievement, but owing to the clarity and strength with which it has expressed the ideal and pointed the way. The noted Gael, "Cu Uladh," has been amongst its Irish contributors.

When the Conscription menace loomed over Ireland in April, 1918, the attitude of organized Irish Labour showed clear and striking straight away. Through a special Congress, one of the greatest in the history of the movement, through its delegates (William O'Brien and Thomas Johnson) on the Mansion House Conference, through *The Voice of Labour*, and otherwise, it declared decisively that no outside authority (or inner for that matter) would compel Irish workers to be conscripts. It resolved on unflinching resistance come what might. The one-day strike which it called for on the 23rd of April, as a token of its resolution, was effected with impressive unanimity over the greater part of Ireland—all but the Orange and "loyalist" quarters in the north-east of Ulster—and that memorable illustration of the workers' power, that day when "Ireland did nothing and did it with a vengeance," had a profound effect. The giant at rest taught a lesson and pointed a moral more effective than a generation's labour of the giant in activity.

The Congress at Waterford that year was an index of growing strength and enthusiasm. William O'Brien, in his presidential address, emphasised the inspiration of Connolly's life and death, that inspiration which had brought them so many thousands of whole-hearted new workers

in the previous two years. [All the pioneers and organizers have consciously followed Connolly.] When Connolly laid down his life for the Irish working-class he laid it down for the workers in all lands. They knew the influence he had been on the great men who had made the Russian Revolution (Lenin in particular had been powerfully affected by his writings). Mr. O'Brien in his graphic review of the situation dwelt on the significant new accessions to their body—the national teachers, the clerical workers, the hosts of agricultural labourers—and insisted that they must henceforth keep within their vision the whole working-class of Ireland, manual and mental, till they had linked up trade with trade and industry with industry, all autonomous in themselves, and fitting coherently into the One Great Union, the vital Brotherhood, which in the ripeness of time would assume the management and control of all the nation's industries, agricultural and manufacturing: this was the only satisfying social order, bringing the true community, the Workers' Republic.

Thereafter Irish Labour became a source of new interest and some anxiety to all other parties by its decision to enter the field with its own candidates at the General Election. By a unanimous vote the National Executive decided that members of the Irish Labour Party should not attend the British House of Commons unless a special Congress should determine a change of policy. The latter point, suggesting a divided mind in the

political order, was criticised in Sinn Fein quarters and indeed in the labour world itself. At the special Congress in Dublin in November, in view of the prospect of a "Peace Election" and the intense desire of the Irish masses that it should turn on the issue of national self-determination alone, it was decided by a large majority (96 votes to 23) to adopt the advice of the National Executive,* to withdraw the Labour candidates from the contest. Having thus recognised and acceded to the general will the Congress discussed and declared the ultimate objects of Irish Labour itself and the way to their realisation—the lines and details had been submitted to and reviewed by the branches in the autumn. It was felt that the time had come "to establish under one jurisdiction (Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party) the double function of industrial and political life," and incidentally to provide for individual membership by sympathisers, men or women, who were not eligible to come in through trade unions. The objects and methods, the Declaration of Rights and the way to their realisation, on which the Congress decided, were these:

To recover for the Nation complete possession of all the natural physical sources of wealth of this country.

To win for the workers of Ireland, collectively, the ownership and control of the whole produce of their labour.

* There were two dissentients at the N. E. meeting.

To secure the democratic management and control of all industries and services by the whole body of workers, manual and mental, engaged therein, in the interest of the Nation and subject to the supreme authority of the National Government.

To obtain for all adults who give allegiance and service to the Commonwealth, irrespective of sex, race or religious belief, equality of political and social rights and opportunities.

To abolish all powers and privileges, social and political, of institutions or persons, based upon property or ancestry, or not granted and confirmed by the freely expressed will of the Irish people; and to insist that in the making and administering of the laws, in the pursuit of industry and commerce, and in the education of the young, Property must always be subordinate to Humanity, and Private Gain must ever give place to the Welfare of the People.

With the foregoing objects in view, to promote the organization of the working class industrially, socially, and politically, e.g.: *in Trade Unions, in Co-operative Societies (both of producers and consumers), and in a Political Labour Party.*

Further means and methods were the securing of labour representation on all national and local bodies, the co-ordination of the work of the several sections of the working-class movement, the promotion of fraternal and helpful relations with the workers of other lands through affiliation and co-operation with the international Labour move-

ment: a point in regard to which the leaders of the Irish workers' movement have been alert and consistent* (they and their followers hailed the Russian Revolution with gladness).

This comprehensive and inspiring programme showed how far the forces of Irish Labour had marched even since Davitt's day. The thought and teaching of Thompson and Lalor in the far nineteenth century and of Connolly and Pearse in the twentieth were here proclaimed as the way and the life by those who spoke for the working masses. The ideal of association, co-operation, and development towards which in the thirties and forties tortured workers obscurely strove was made the heart of a working programme. Eamonn de Valera's invitation to Irish Labour to organize itself found here a response—a promise of widening and deepening organization on both social and mental lines for the highest national ends—that would have gladdened him in his British prison.

In association with the declaration of the toilers' aims and rights we may set the considered and searching thought of a worker in the mental order, *The National Being* of "Æ." It is important for its spiritual ideas and optimism, for a philosophy of life and universe that makes the Labour struggle appear as part of a vast movement towards divinity in manifestation and actuality. It is important for its keen endeavour to reveal salient underlying qualities of the Irish

*William O'Brien and D. R. Campbell were appointed delegates to the Stockholm Conference, 1917.

race, that have not been able to realise themselves in the body politic for hundreds of years, but that are part of the subconscious element in the people's nature: the sense of democracy in economics and social life (co-operation) and of aristocracy in the intellectual order (love of individuality in leadership, and of freedom of thought). The trend of things for ages has been to drive us the other way, and being against nature it has meant disorder and disaster. Besides its thought and idealism, without which men and movements are worth little, this work of "Æ" brings us down to the everyday ordeals and directly to the immediately practical possibilities of Labour. It is rich in what we may well call Labour statesmanship—to an earlier expression of one of the phases, the plan to bring urban and rural people into fruitful economic alliance and harmony, Connolly devoted a sympathetic chapter in *The Re-conquest of Ireland;* and there are healthy indications that workers through the country have begun to realise its possibilities. Apart from the points that bear specifically on the sphere and potentialities of the workers, the greater part of the book is their concern in reality, for Labour should be vitally interested in mental and spiritual no less than in pressing material affairs. Indeed the end of the struggle is mental and spiritual, though it may not seem so yet. The breaking of the chains, the unloading of the degrading burdens that we know, will inevitably lead to the resurrection and the flowering of the workers' deeper natures, now

blunted or buried. Then they may be artists and creators.

There has been nothing to show that the "classes" and professions in general, though recognising the uprising of Labour—or part of it—have ever devoted an hour's thought to the conception of the workers as co-partners in the social scheme. Even in Sinn Fein papers that have given some attention and sympathy to the toiling orders it has not been adopted or recognised, though particular contributors may favour it. Labour's lot is to be improved in a free Ireland, but the inference, even in the national journals, is that Labour must remain an underclass and a serving class. In regard to the position of women in industry, general Irish opinion has been mostly reactionary. For grossly sweated women workers there has been a certain floating sympathy, and little more. As to the general economic, social, and intellectual emancipation of womanhood—even after all the fine work done by women in the Gaelic League, the Suffrage Movement, Sinn Fein, and by the United Irishwomen, Cumann na mBan, etc.*—there is a good deal of stone age philosophy in the country still, even amongst some of our trade unionists. Labour pioneers and women pioneers have to go on doing the thinking and teaching that are really the

* Apart from noted Irishwomen like Mrs. Sheehy-Skeffington, Countess Markievicz, Miss Winifred Carney, etc., who have been directly associated with the Irish Labour Movement, many women in the above-named bodies have helped it, or affected it indirectly, to a considerable degree.

whole nation's business; for of course the right and natural re-ordering and regulation of the community concern not solely the under and oppressed classes but the whole body. In this connection it is hopeful to note such subjects as Latterday Irish Trade Unionism and James Connolly's Theory of Labour in Irish History in the literary competitions of the Oireachtas, 1919, and to find the question of Industrial Unionism as the best social scheme in a free Ireland set down for debate. Bringing the Gaelic mind to face modern realities and their relation to permanent truths must help it onward to a healthy creative vigour that will be an asset to the community.

A fact that would change the whole situation and shorten the course to the Co-operative Commonwealth would be the conversion of Ireland in general to practical Christianity—from the accommodating semi-religion of most of the possessing and professional classes and the melodramatic theology of a good deal of the clerical body. Who knows? The doctrine of human divinity and brotherhood may not always count for less than a dream in the theory and practice of churchmen and employers (Catholic and Protestant) in relation to the under-men, and all men.

We bring our record to a close at a time when inner and outer kingdoms and orders of the world, after violent and tragic agitation and upheaval, must be reshaped or re-made. How far there may be a new rule and vision, and how far a mere re-shuffling of old tyranny, will be duly revealed.

Irish Labour, after a shattering and inhuman history, is being called to come forth and work with mind and soul as well as body. It is responding to the call, though a goodly element of it yet is like a tired sleeper, suddenly awakened, whose frame is still weary, whose mind is confused, whose spirit is scarcely conscious: it does not seem entirely sure for the moment that the Commonwealth may not be a dream of the departing night rather than a fact of the rising day. All the happier will be the discovery, with growing consciousness and confidence, with experience of scientific organization inspired by an ideal, with training in co-operation both social and mental, that Life to those who will it can be allied with Beauty, and Work with Wonder.

AUTHORITIES AND SOURCES.

A great many books, parliamentary reports, pamphlets, trade union documents, newspapers, etc., have been studied or re-studied in connection with this volume. In the main they are mentioned in their due places in the text. For reasons indicated therein they are of unequal value as aids towards the story of Irish Labour, which has been dealt with so largely in the past from the capitalist standpoint. Some of them while useful up to a point need to be very critically considered. The study of the evidence before the parliamentary commissions and committees is an exhaustive and arduous task, but the results are appreciable; while we may think little of conclusions or theories a good deal of the first-hand contemporary knowledge and testimony is valuable. Sometimes we have the story of workers as well as employers, and now and then the judgment of some who could take detached views (more or less). It seemed well worth while to deal fully with the facts about Irish trades unionism revealed before the select committees of 1824, 1825, and 1838. A few details from the masters' standpoint have cropped up from time to time, a couple of recent books including them; but they give a very misleading view of the facts as a whole.

All the volumes, parliamentary reports, and pamphlets mentioned will be found in the National Library, Dublin, with the exceptions of Kerr's *Exposition* and Pemberton's *Address to the Bricklayers and Plasterers, Etc.*, which are in the great collection of HALLIDAY TRACTS in the Royal Irish Academy, volumes 1611 and 1567 respectively. The latter volume also contains *The Reformer*, by James Connery, Limerick, 1833, in which that farmer with reforming ideas included a terribly realistic picture of peasant "housing" conditions.

The work of dealing with the great variety of James Connolly's writings and general activities has been simplified all the way by a study of the mass of material collected by Desmond Ryan for *James Connolly: His Life and Writings* [In preparation]. For official reports of the earlier Irish Trades Union Congresses and other helpful matter now rare, I am indebted to William O'Brien; while he, Cathal O'Shannon, Thomas Johnson, Thomas MacPartlin, and Andrew E. Malone, kindly gave me the benefit of points from their varied experiences of the democratic movement.